


B-26 MARAUDER

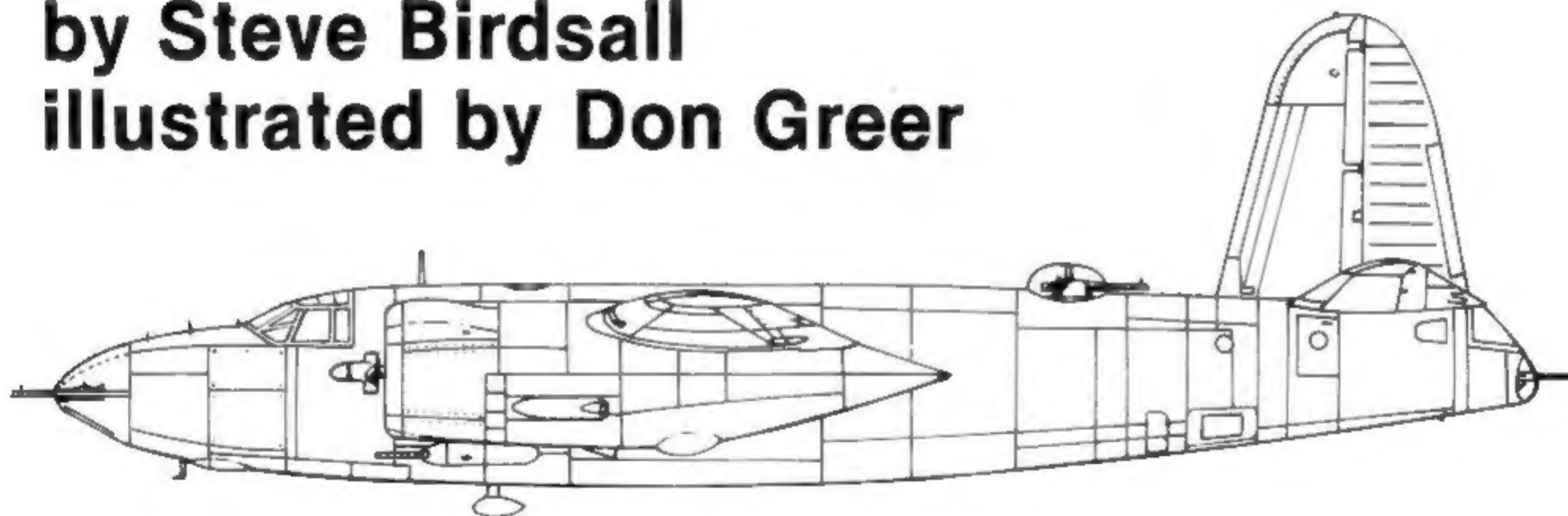
in action



 **squadron/signal publications**
Aircraft No. 50

B-26 MARAUDER **in action**

by Steve Birdsall
illustrated by Don Greer



squadron/signal publications



B-26B-55-MA, 42-96200, 454th Bomb Squadron, 323rd Bomb Group, 9th Air Force. Olive Drab and natural metal.

1050

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ISBN 0-89747-119-9

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Acknowledgements

My thanks go to the following people for their help in providing photos and information: W. Lewis Nalls, who researched the B-26 at the USAF photo archives in Washington, Frank Smith, the Air Force Museum, Oscar Swenson and, of course, the United States Air Force. All the photos are USAF unless otherwise credited.

The 319th Bomb Group's *Big Ass Bird* flew 145 missions between June 1943 and November 1944, and was the fastest plane in the group. A B-26C-15, S/N 41-34938, her first crew was led by Lt. T.C. Rammelkamp. She was shot up badly on her 55th mission, and again on her 59th, but remained a lucky ship. Her crew chief was J. Wesley Johnston for her first 120 missions. Along with *Twenty-niner*, a B-26B-15, which flew 105 missions, *Big Ass Bird* crosses the Italian coastline on its way back to base, 1944. (USAF)





The first pre-production B-26, there being no prototype built, is put through its paces by Martin's chief engineer Ken Ebel, 25 November 1940. This first example was unarmed and except for rudder stripes and wing roundels, the first Marauder was unmarked. (USAF)



Introduction

The Army Air Corps wanted a high speed medium bomber — and to achieve that goal sacrifices in other areas were apparently acceptable. The requirements were spelled out to the competing aircraft companies in the March 1939 Circular Proposal 39-640. In July the Glenn L. Martin Company submitted their design. Prepared by a design team led by Peyton M. Magruder, the proposed medium bomber carried the company designation Martin 179. The design was to have the highest wing loading of any aircraft so far designed for the USAAC, but it would deliver the speed required (323mph). The sacrifices involved, the inevitable high landing speeds (over 100mph) and long take-offs, were considered acceptable by the design review board. Martin's reputation for producing fine aircraft and the promise of rapid delivery also must have influenced the decision.

The clean cigar-shaped fuselage made the new bomber perhaps the most aesthetically pleasing design achieved to date by any nation. The small wings, with a span of only 65 feet, were dominated by a pair of 1850 horsepower Pratt & Whitney R-2800-5 Double Wasp engines. The pointed tail cone was to mount a single .30 cal machine gun, and another .30 was to be mounted in a ball-joint in the nose. The armament was completed by a Martin 25CE power turret installed in the dorsal and mounting a pair of .50 cal mgs. The design easily out-scored the competitive designs submitted by other companies (the nearest contender was the North American B-25) and, in September 1939, was dubbed B-26 and an initial contract for 201 aircraft was awarded — while the aircraft was still on the drawing board. Before the so-called 'prototype' even flew, a total 1,131 would be ordered.

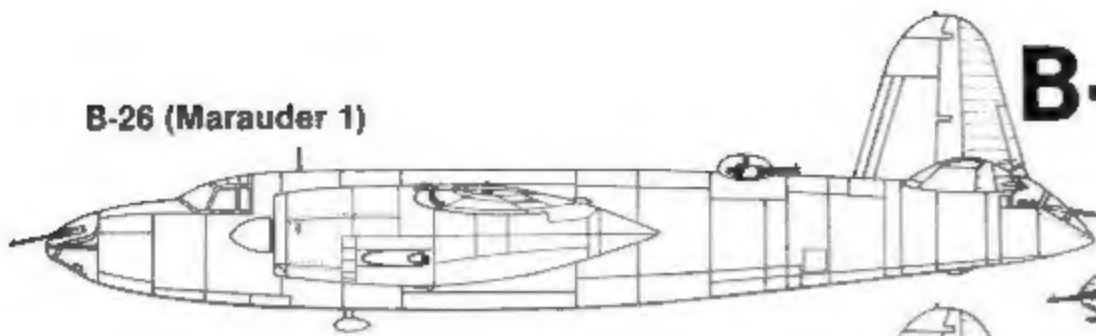
Martin's chief engineer Ken Ebel personally directed construction of the pre-production B-26, 40-1361, which he took into the air on 25 November 1940. The first four pre-production aircraft were used for testing, as there had been no prototype as such. These initial pre-production aircraft completed an abbreviated 113 hour USAAC test program, which in its haste to get the new bomber into service, declared itself satisfied with the B-26. In February 1941, only 23 months after specs had been let, the Army Air Corps accepted the first four Marauders and ordered their delivery to the 22nd BG, Langley Field, VA.



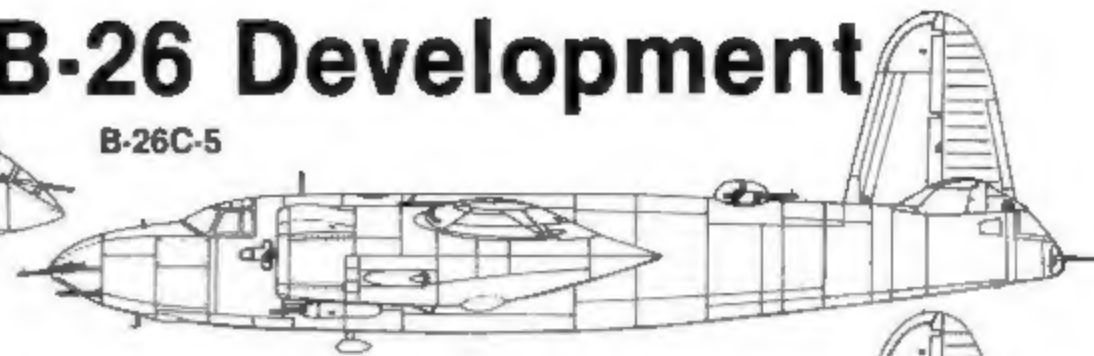
In squadron work up with the 22nd Bomb Group, Langley, VA, the third Marauder (S/N 40-1363) carries part of its standard armament, a .30 cal mg in the nose and a .50 cal mg in the tail. It is still missing the dorsal power turret. The markings are now standard pre-war with roundels on the fuselage and US Army under the port wing. The cowl band is blue. (Martin)

B-26 Development

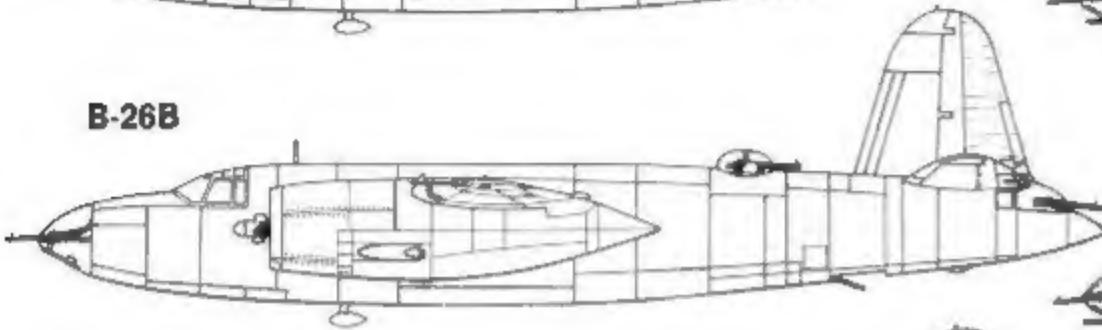
B-26 (Marauder 1)



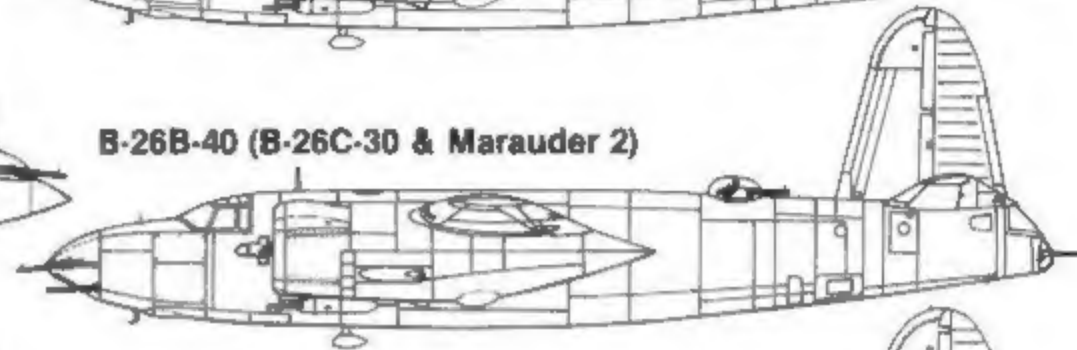
B-26C-5



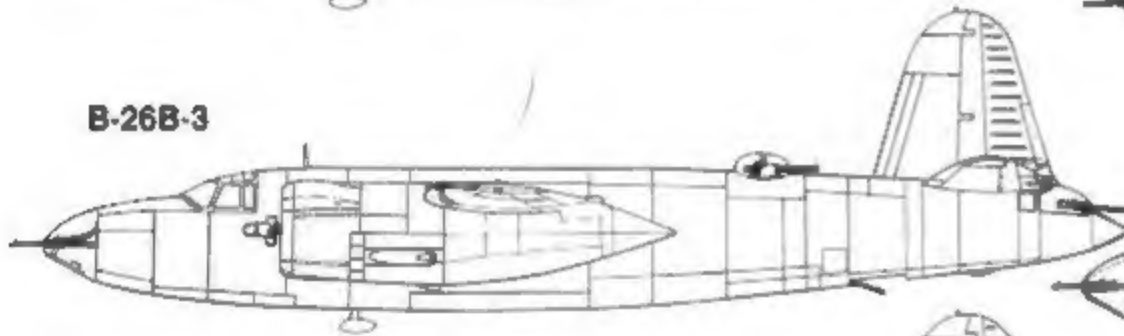
B-26B



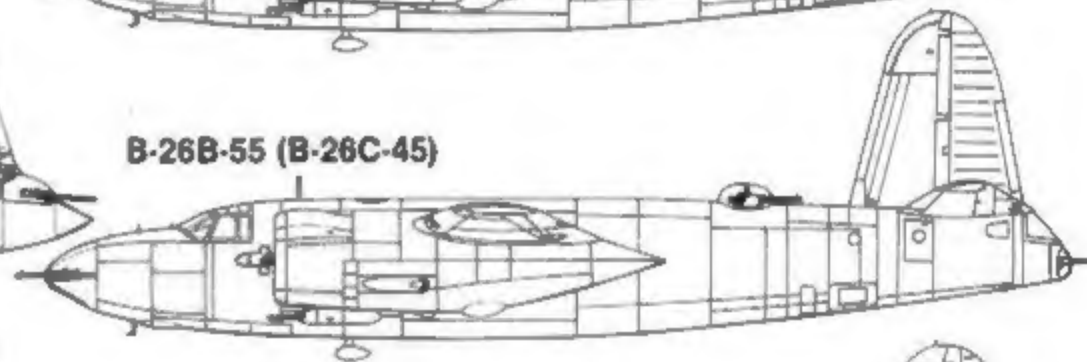
B-26B-40 (B-26C-30 & Marauder 2)



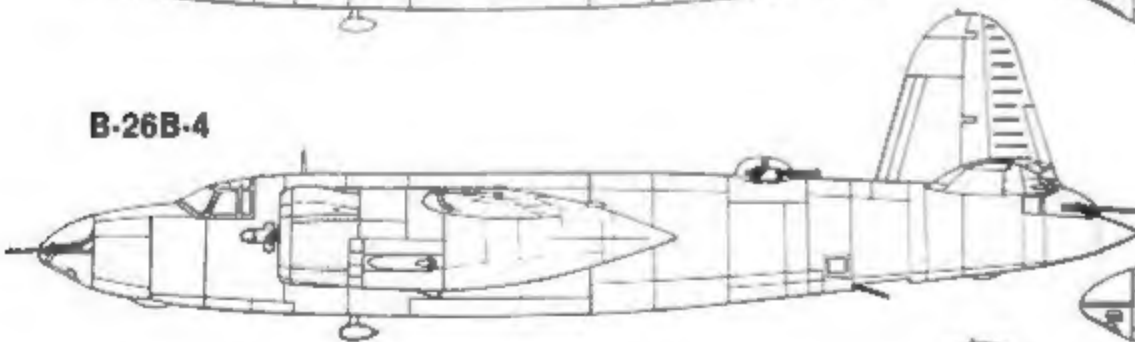
B-26B-3



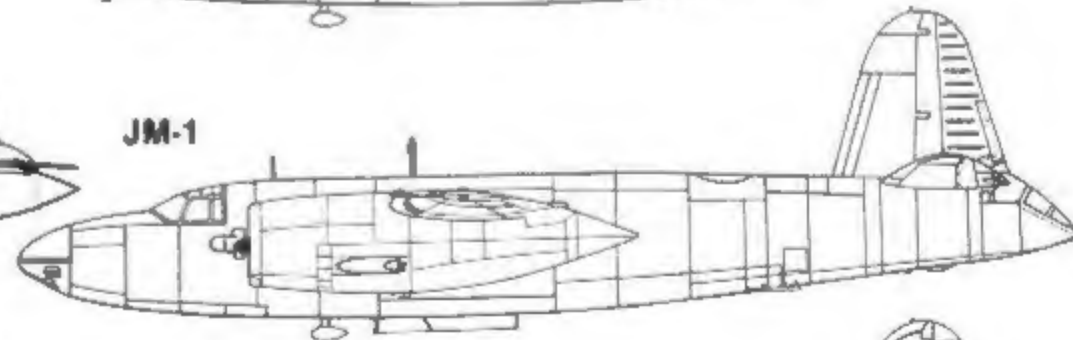
B-26B-55 (B-26C-45)



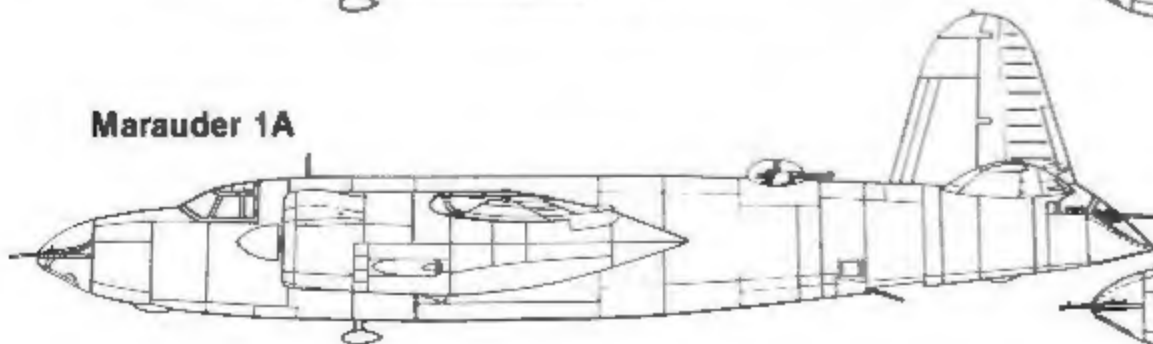
B-26B-4



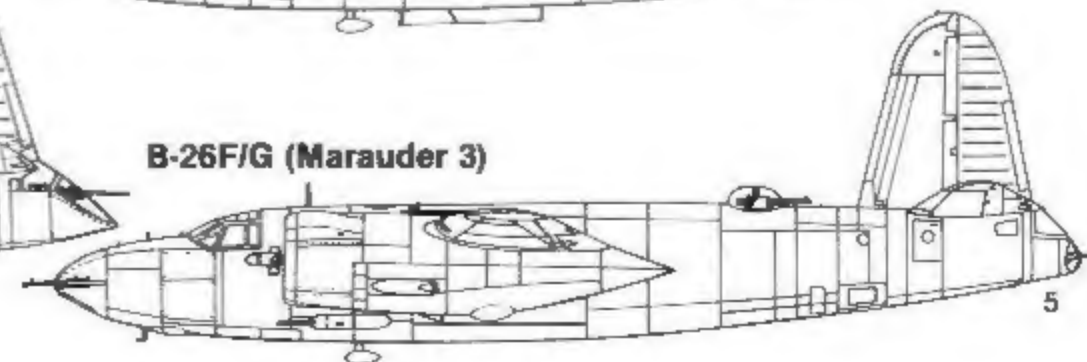
JM-1



Marauder 1A



B-26F/G (Marauder 3)





An early B-26 stands behind its crew, led by Lt. Farrell, at Barksdale Field, LA. Still pre-war, the bomber now carries Olive Drab and Neutral Gray camouflage, the spinner and cowl band are white.

B-26

The initial 201 **Marauders** (the name was made official in October 1941) were classified B-26s, including the four test aircraft. The B-26 had a gross weight of 30,035 lbs, about a ton over design specs, and a top speed of 315mph. Maximum bomb load was 5800 lbs, only a ton short of a B-17's. The landing speed was about 130mph and take-off run in fully-loaded condition was 2500 ft.

Almost immediately the Marauder began to pick up the reputation of being a *killer*, a reputation that would hound it throughout its career. On no less than four different occasions the Marauder's future would hang in the balance as a committee decided whether or not to scrap the whole B-26 program. Each time, however, the decision was *reluctantly* made to continue Marauder production, yet by war's end the *Widow Maker* would enjoy the enviable statistics of being the safest bomber that USAAF put into skies over Europe. One B-26, *Flak-Bait*, would fly more combat missions (202) than any other US medium bomber of World War II — and survive.

The trouble began immediately after the first B-26s were delivered to the 22nd BG at Langley Field. The initial testing of the Marauder had been with fully armed and equipped aircraft, but the new B-26s arriving at Langley were minus government-supplied equipment (guns, radios, armor, etc.). The change in the center-of-gravity (cg) made the Marauders nose heavy and a rash of nose gear failures followed. The nose wheel strut was strengthened but it wasn't until full armament was added that the problem disappeared. Next, Marauders began crashing on take-off. The trouble was traced to failure of the Curtiss-Electric prop. The propeller would occasionally lose control and feather at the instant of highest demand — at take-off. The result was almost always a crash. This problem was traced to faulty maintenance. Ground crews, unfamiliar with aircraft that had a

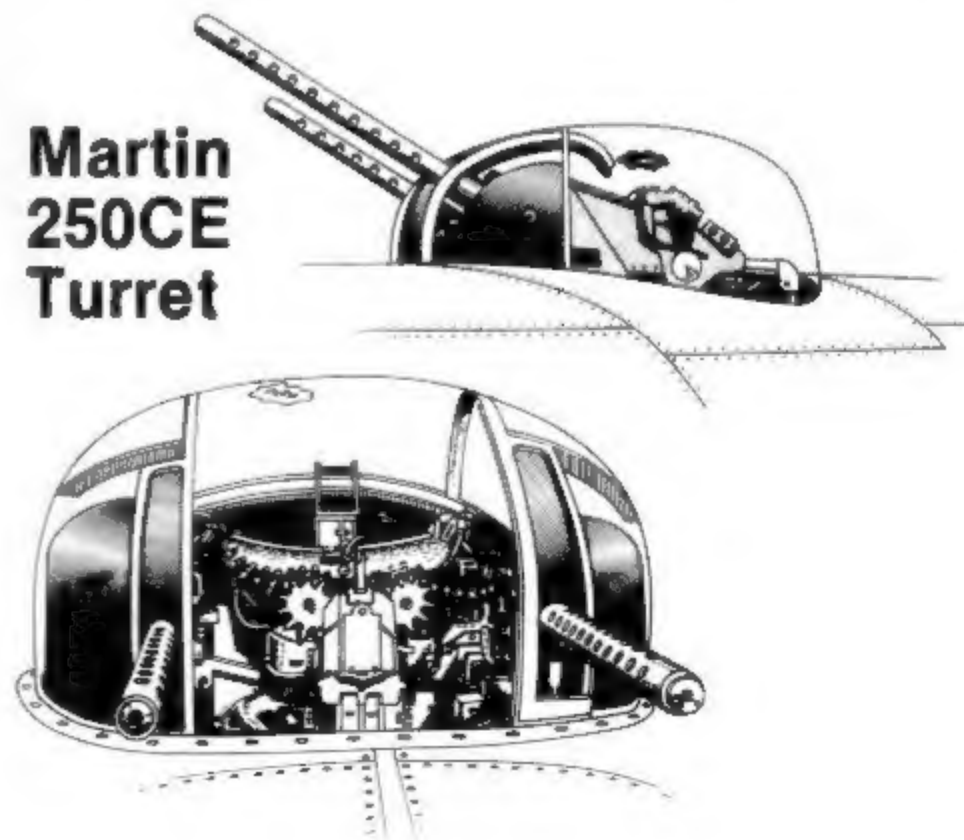
multitude of electrically-driven systems, would service such items as the power turret off internal battery power. This could cause the depletion of the batteries and lead to the failure of the props, also electric, at a critical moment. The solution was to provide ground crews with battery carts.

A problem less easy to solve was the inevitable collision of a 'hot' aircraft and 'green' flight crews. As long as Marauders were being flown by experienced crews there was no problem. But as soon as young lieutenants, fresh from AT-6s, began transitioning onto B-26s, the accident rate rose alarmingly. With nine medium bomber groups being formed in early 1942, the situation rapidly became critical. Only enthusiastic reports from the 22nd BG, which was flying Marauders in the SW Pacific, and the RAF in the Mid-East kept the B-26 from being grounded permanently. The problem was solved by the addition of an advanced training syllabus in Curtiss AT-9s and the introduction of later marks of the Marauder with larger wings. Many B-26s (and B-26As) were later retrofitted with 'B'-style features, making identification, in the absence of a known serial number, a very tricky business.

B-26A & Marauder I

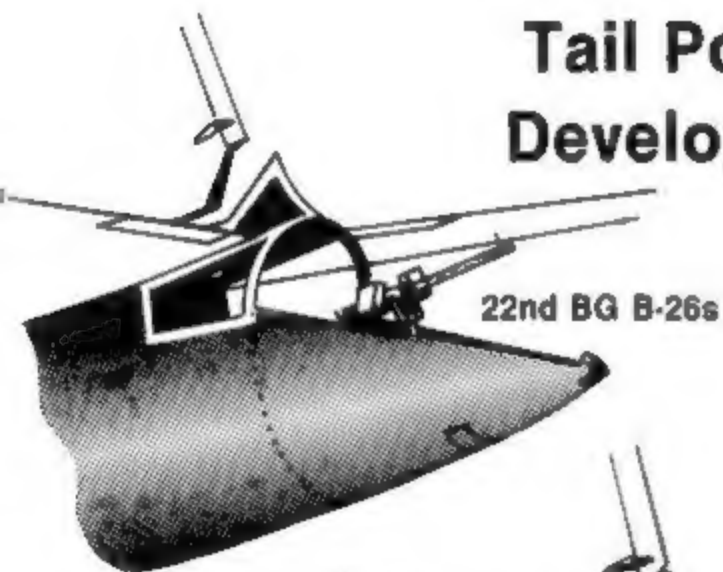
Starting with the 202nd airframe (S/N 41-7345), the next 30 Marauders were B-26As. They differed from the first model solely in having fittings for an auxiliary fuel tank provided in the aft bomb bay and in having .50 cal mgs replace the .30s at the nose and tail (though many early models had this change retrofitted in the field). Fifty-two more were built to this standard for the RAF (FK109-FK160) under the designation Marauder I. The R-2800-39, of identical power rating as the -5, was the sole difference in the 109 B-26A-1s which followed on the assembly line.

Martin 250CE Turret

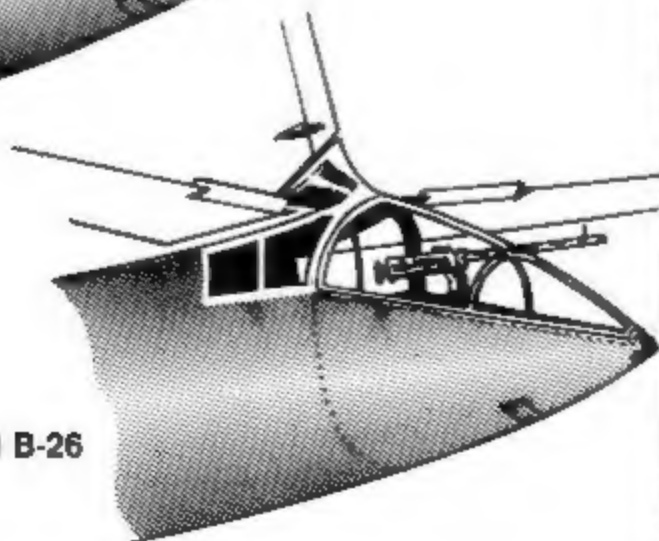




Tail Position Development



22nd BG B-26s



Standard B-26

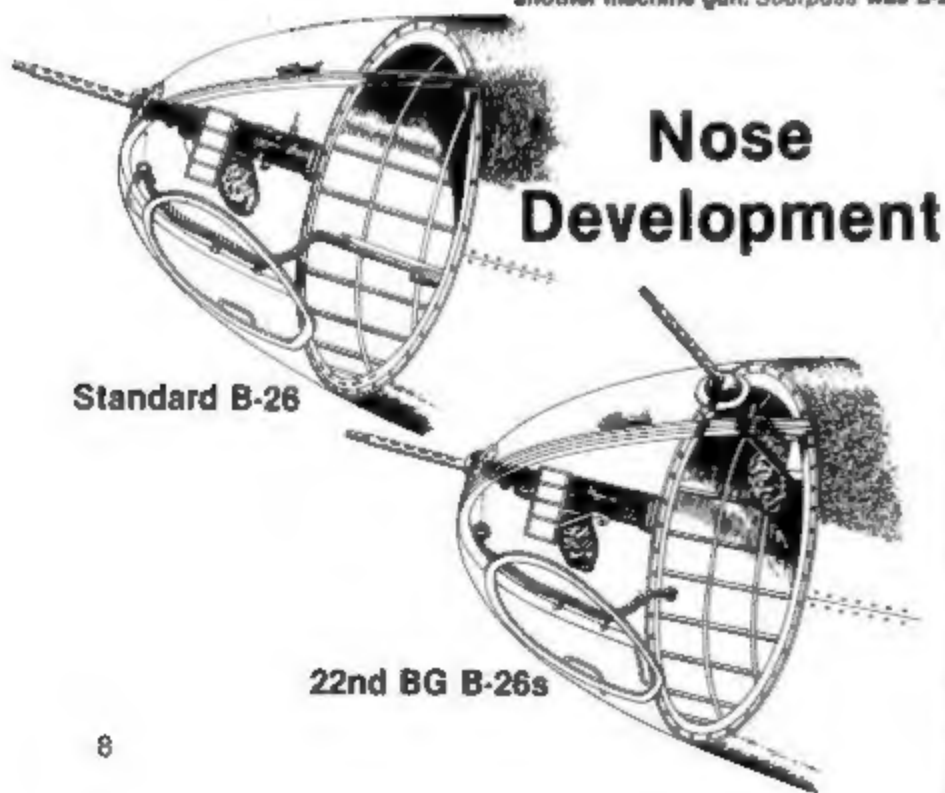
The 22nd Bomb Group was the first to receive the new Marauders and were the first to take them into combat. In February 1942 they arrived in Australia with 44 aircraft. 40-1437 was the 77th B-26. The serial number is in Yellow on the fuselage side. (Australian War Memorial)

An Australian Bren Gun Carrier crew passes some time with a tail gunner on a 22nd BG B-26, New Guinea, 11 August, 1942. The 22nd BG removed the tail gunner's transparent fairing on all their Marauders. (Australian War Memorial)





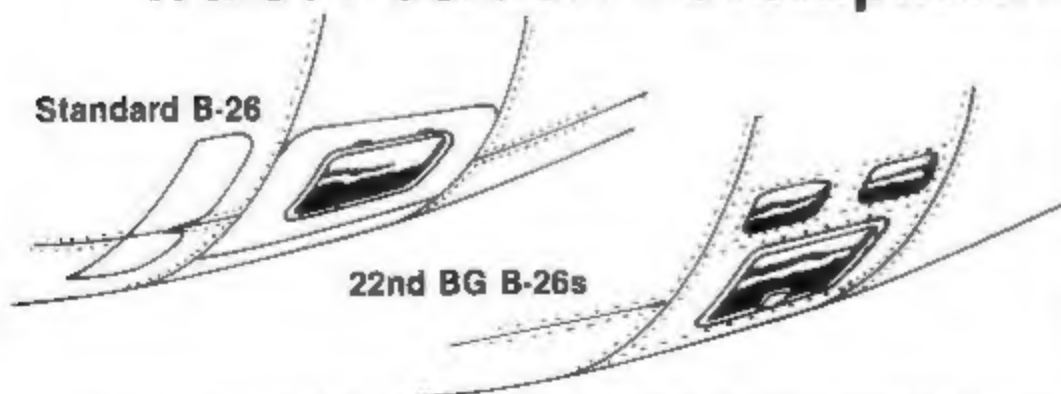
The 22nd Group also modified their B-26s by adding an extra .50 calibre gun in the nose, and by modifying the beam hatches for the addition of another machine gun. *Sourpuss* was B-26 S/N 40-1532. Later Marauders carried their serial number on the tail fin. (Australian War Memorial)





Operating from forward airstrips in New Guinea added to the hazards of war. Often 22nd BG B-26 crews had only minutes to get their aircraft into the air after an incoming Japanese raid was signaled. This Marauder, bracketed by burning fuel, was caught on the ground.

Waist Position Development



(Above Right & Right) *Cossack*, a 22nd Group Marauder slides in at Seven Mile Strip, Port Moresby, New Guinea. A drainage ditch finally stopped her.



Gen. Jimmy Doolittle, a strong Marauder supporter, took this B-26A on a tour of stateside training bases, 'selling' the bomber to its pilots. He put on demonstrations of just what a Marauder could do in the proper hands. (Smithsonian Institution)

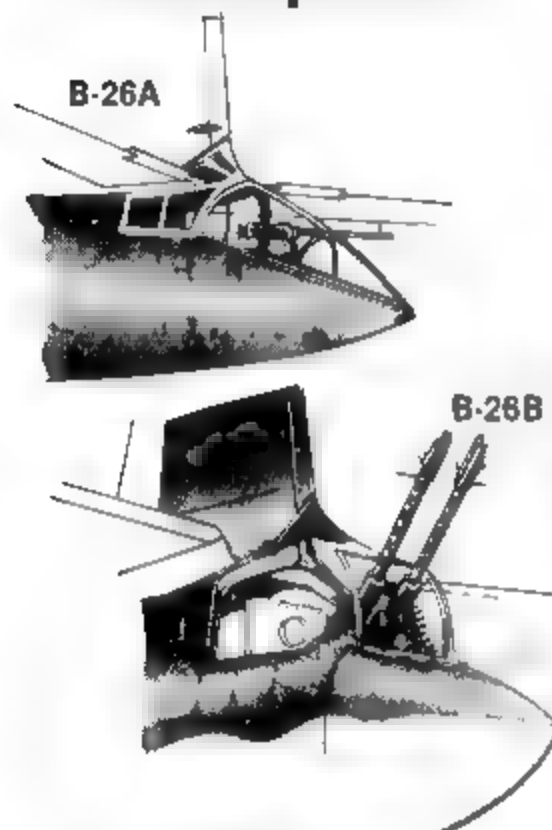
This stripped B-26 is the *Hacking Hare*, 40-1488, which went overseas with the 22nd Bomb Group and was the aircraft in which Lyndon Johnson won his silver Star in 1942. When the Group had only 32 aircraft left in January 1943, it was pulled out of combat. When it was found that there were only enough sound Marauders to equip one squadron, the 19th Bomb Squadron stayed with the B-26, while the other three squadrons of the 22nd Group converted to B-25s. Spruced up and shining, the 19th BS went back into action in June 1943 as the *Silver Fleet*. (Bill Miller)

This B-26, 40-1542, became a trainer stateside complete with elaborate medium green splotches over Olive Drab on all upper surfaces. She has been retrofitted with the enlarged carburetor intakes which were introduced on the B-26B-3. (USAF)



A B-26B taxis in front of a line-up of B-26As at a stateside training base. The twin gun tail is the main distinguishing feature of early 'B's' (USAF)

Tail Position Development



B-26B & C

The 'B' and 'C' models of the Marauder were produced in larger numbers than any other, over 3000 being built. B-26Bs differed from the equivalent 'C' models only in site of manufacture: the former being built at Martin's Baltimore plant, the latter at a new facility at Omaha, Nebraska. But since the Omaha factory didn't begin production until several months after 'B' models began coming off the line at Baltimore, the sub-variant designations didn't match. B-26C 5s, for example, were similar to B-26B-10s. But within these model runs there were tremendous evolutionary differences. In many ways the B-26B-55 was radically different from the original B-26B, much more different than a 'B' was from an 'A'.



B-26B & B-26B-2

The original 'B' model differed from the 'A' mainly in armament. Most noticeably, the single 50 cal mg tail position was replaced by an enlarged lengthened (increasing length to 58 ft 3 in) twin mount, with ammunition supply increased from 400 rounds to 1500. In response to complaints about the Marauder's lack of downward defensive fire, a flexible mount for a single 50 cal mg was provided to fire through the rear crew entry hatch. Propeller spinners were deleted on the B-26B and fittings for the carrying of a torpedo, which had been optional on the 'A', was standard on the 'B'. The B-26B-2 had the more powerful R-2800-41 (2000hp at take-off) which led to a 6mph increase in top speed (317mph) at altitude. More importantly, it helped shorten the Marauder's notoriously long take-off run. The change in engine caused no external change on the assembly line and only the serial number could differentiate a 'B' and a 'B-2'. However, almost all 'B-2's' were retrofitted with the later style cowl intakes, making them indistinguishable from 'B-3's'.

B-26B-3

Except for enlarged carburetor intakes designed to accept tropical sand filters, the B-26B-3 was identical to the 'B-2'. The 'B-3' also had a new mark of the Double Wasp, the 43, of similar power to the 41.

B-26B-55

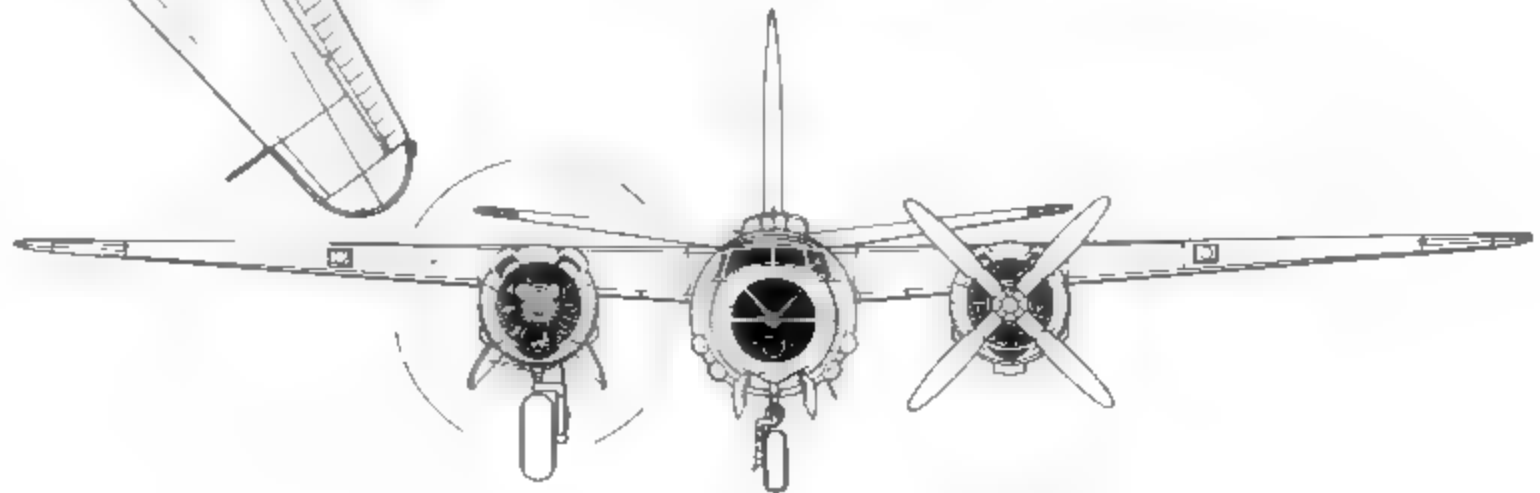
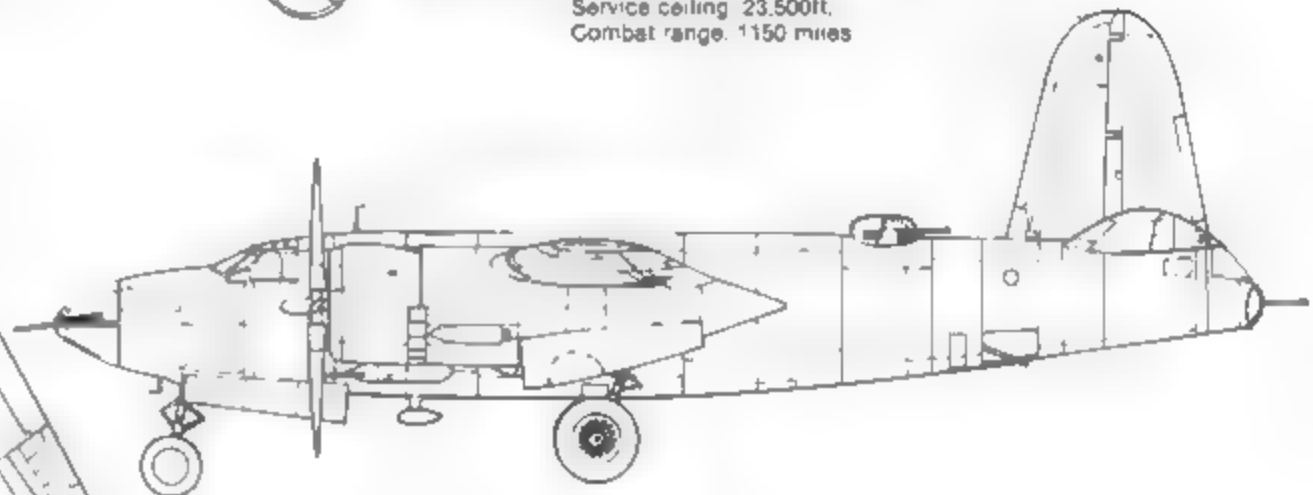
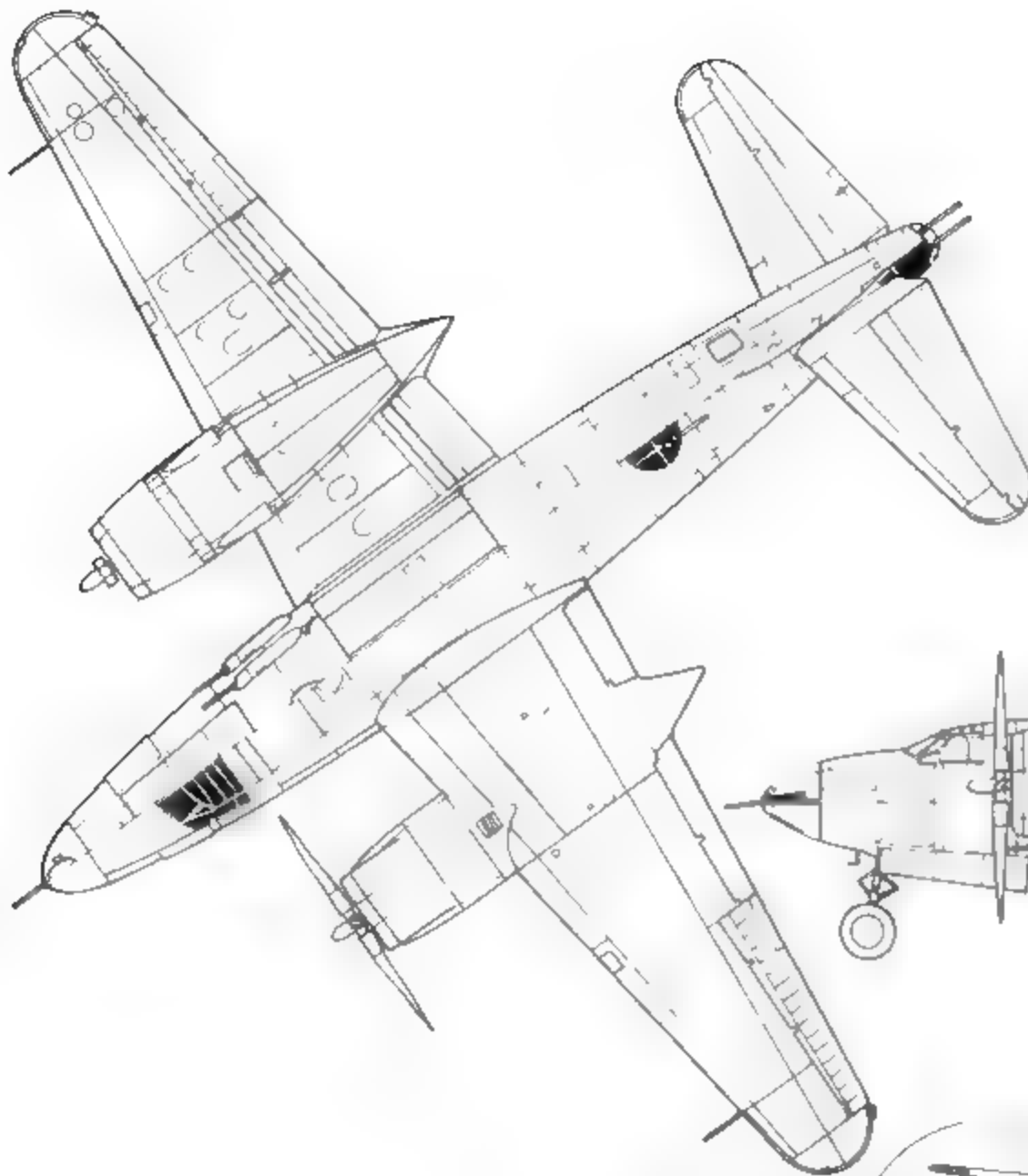
Specifications

Dimensions. Span, 85ft 0in,
Length, 58ft 3in,
Height, 19ft 10in,
Wing area, 602sqft

Engines: Two Pratt & Whitney R-2800-39
Double Wasp radial engines rated at 1850hp
at sea level

Weight: Maximum take-off, 34 000 lbs.

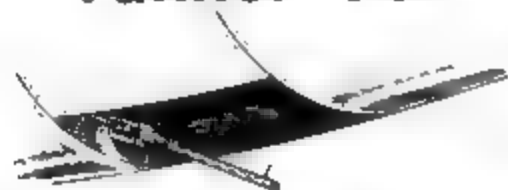
Performance: Maximum speed, 311mph at 14,500ft,
Service ceiling, 23,500ft,
Combat range, 1150 miles





This early B-26B on a training mission over the central US has starboard prop feathered while flying on the port engine. (Smithsonian Institution)

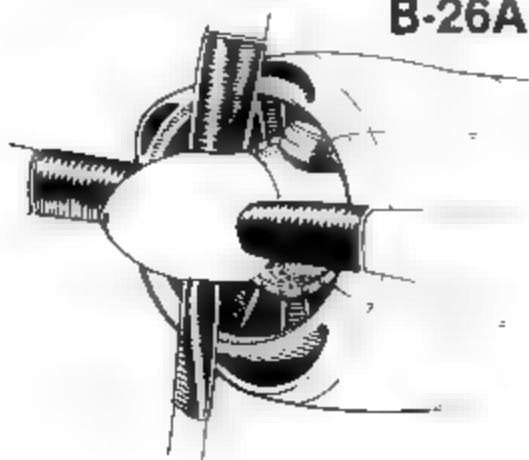
'Tunnel' Gun



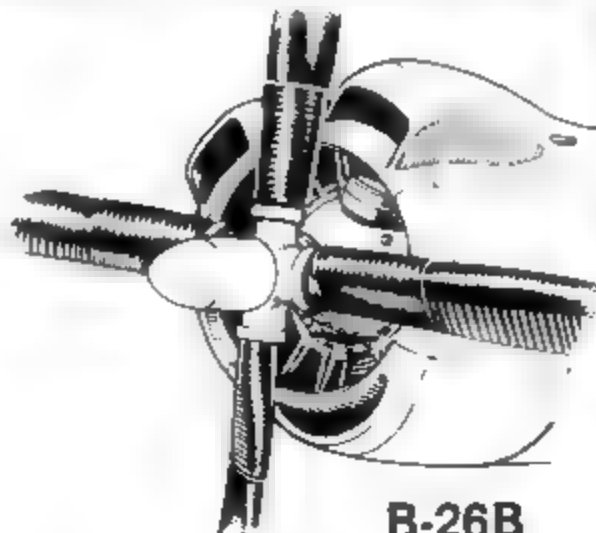
Engine Development

Typical of the pilots who fought and won the air war over Europe, a young Lt. Leon Shulman poses in front of one of the big P & W radiators that powered his Marauder. The enlarged carburetor intakes and lack of spinner, typical of a B-26B-3, are visible here. (Leon Shulman)

B-26A



B-26B





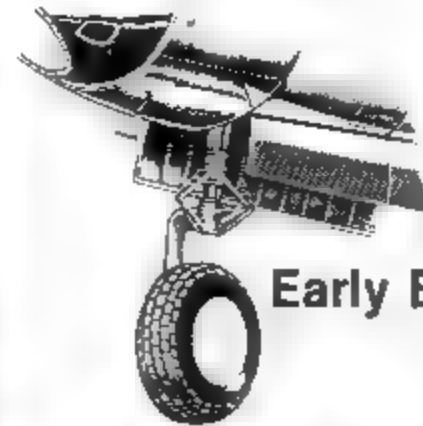
The B-26B-4 introduced factory-installed waist gun positions in the place of the single tunnel mounted gun. A young gunner poses next to his weapon. (William L. Johnston, Jr.)

B-26B-4 & Marauder IA

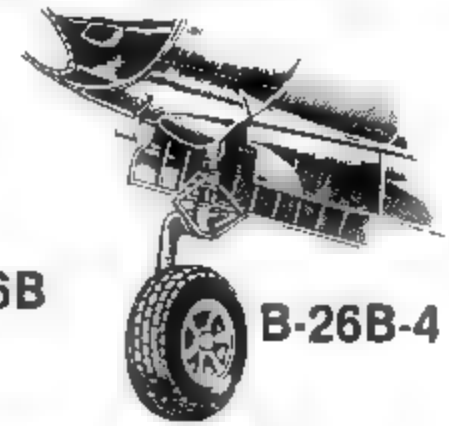
The B-26B-4 was essentially similar to the preceding B-3 except for the introduction of a lengthened nose wheel strut. This was another modification designed to shorten the take-off run and, additionally, to make for easier transition from tail wheel trainers to the tricycle-gear Marauder. This change showed externally with a prominent bulge under the nose, partially overlapping the forward edge of the nose gear doors. B-26B-4s, and some earlier 'Bs' had the nose gun moved from an above center position to the point of the bombardier's plexiglass structure. The Marauder IA was a B-4' produced for the RAF which retained a number of early features, most noticeably propeller spinners and A style armament (i.e. single tail gun and no ventral 'tunnel' gun).

The last 124 B-26B-4s had the single ventral gun deleted and waist positions added below and behind the dorsal turret, each with a single .50 cal. mg. Sliding hatches covered the positions when not in use.

Nose Wheel Development



Early B-26B

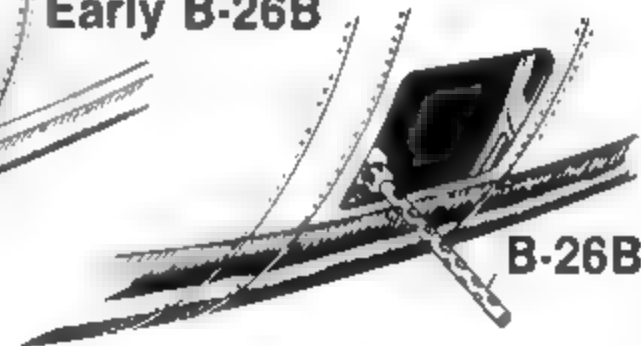


B-26B-4

Waist Position Development

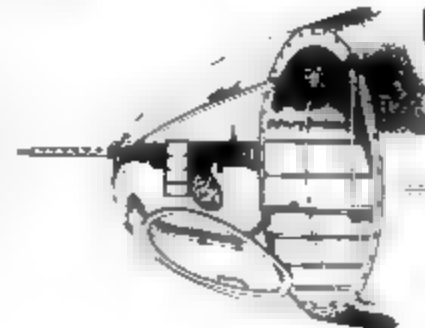


Early B-26B

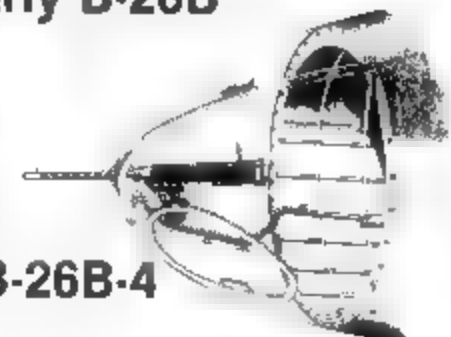


B-26B-4

Nose Development



Early B-26B



B-26B-4



The sixth B-26C-5, S/N 41 34878, displays the wide wings and tall tail that marked all later Marauders. This early Omaha-built bird has a number of anachronistic features not typical of main production 'C-5's, including early style nose and carburetor intakes. (USAF)



Wing Development

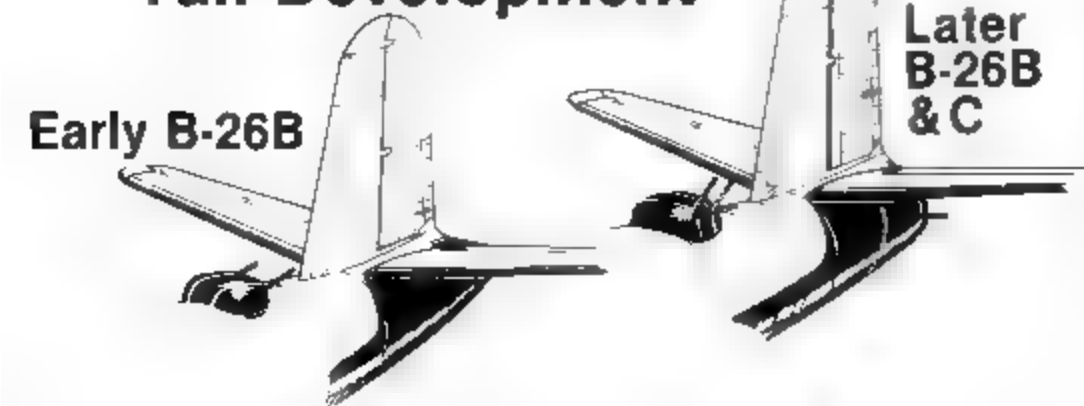
Later B-26B
& C



Early B-26B

Tail Development

Later
B-26B
& C



Early B-26B

Long-Wing Marauders (B-26B-10 & 15, B-26C-5 & 6)

The most drastic change in the basic Marauder plan, designed to turn the 'Widowmaker' and make it an easier aircraft for new pilots to fly, was the introduction of a new lengthened wing. Span was increased from 65 ft to 71 ft and area from 602 sq ft to 658 sq ft. Top speed dropped a remarkable 35mph (282mph). A slight dihedral angle was incorporated and the split flaps were replaced by slotted ones. Despite this major alteration in the Marauder's dimensions, it is difficult to distinguish in photographs between small and large wing B-26s since the wing planform was virtually identical. A much surer distinguishing feature of the 'B-10', 'C-5' and all later marks is a new taller fin and rudder also introduced on these models. A major augmentation of the forward firing armament was introduced on these models. Four package 50 cal machine guns were fitted, two to a side below and behind the cockpit. A further fixed 50 cal mg was installed to fire through the Plexiglass nose, below and to the right of the flexible mount. The nose now had a 'Y'-shaped brace behind the upper half molding. During the production of these series, a bulged main gear door was introduced.

Martin's Omaha plant began production with these variants, the 'C-5' being its version of the Baltimore-built 'B-10'. They weren't identical however. The 'C-5' actually entered production before the 'B-10' and incorporated the above mentioned changes from the 'B-4'. When 'B-10' production began, however, it incorporated one further change, the enlargement and aft relocation of the waist gun position by one fuselage frame. On the B-10 they were seated below the fin and now fitted with wind defectors.

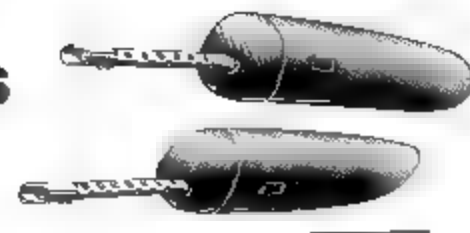


B-26C-5 and C-5 models, at Rufflaque, French West Africa in June 1943 are being fueled up. Equivalent to the Baltimore B-26B-10, these Marauders feature a taller fin and rudder, an increased wing span, and heavier armament. (USAF)

322nd BG Marauders encounter flak over France. Both aircraft here are early long-wing Marauders with hand-operated tail gun position. PN-Q is a B-26B-10, PN-V is a C-5. Note the revised waist position on the B-10. (USAF)



Package Guns



Nose Development



Early B-26B

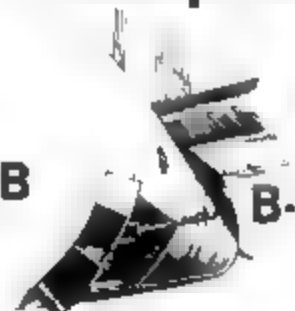


Later B-26B
& C

Waist Position Development



Early B-26B
& C



B-26B-10

Main Landing Gear



Early
B-26B
& C



Later B-26B
& C



A quartette of shark-mouthed 444th BS Marauders bomb targets in Italy. While the three lead aircraft are later models, the trailing bird is a B-26-10 with the hand-operated tail turret.

(Above Right & Below Right) A rare opportunity to see both sides of an aircraft, in this case *Loretta Young*, a B-26B-15 from the 388th Bomb Group. She flew 85 missions before a wheels-up landing at great Dunmow ended her career. Her right side is seen on 19 April 1944, her left on 1 June. At that time her record was 43 missions including a pair of decoy runs indicated by the Duck silhouettes (USAF)

Mr. Five-By-Five is a B-26B-15, 41-31612, with the yellow tail band of the 388th Bomb Group. Here she is attacking the road network behind the Normandy beachhead soon after D-Day (USAF)





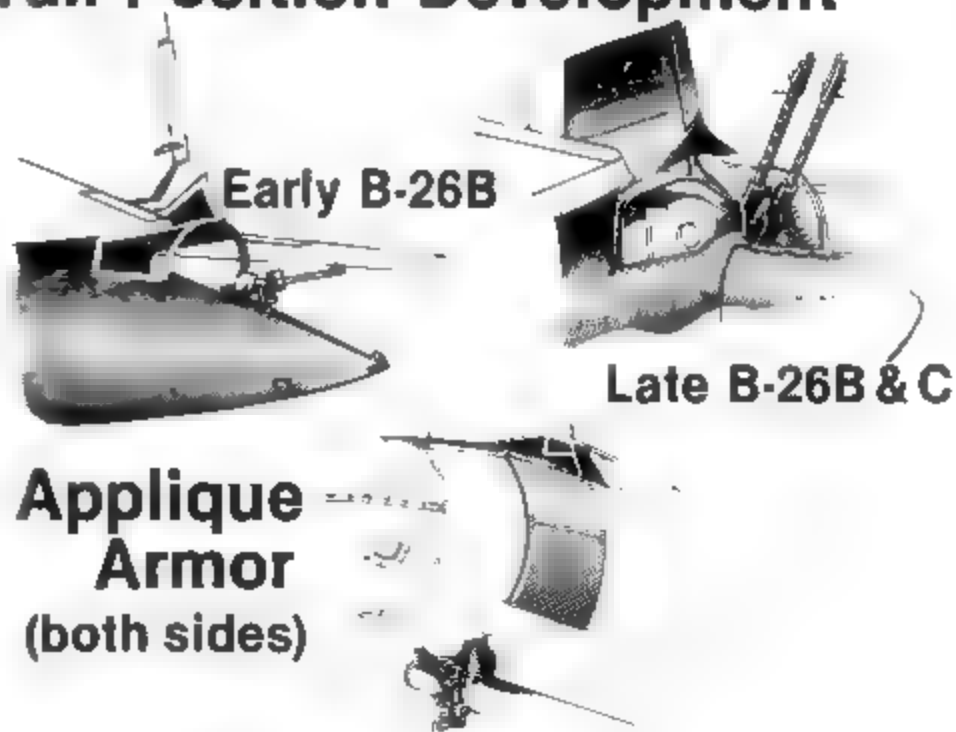
A Tasker, A Tasker, A Double Engine Gasket was a B-26C-25, employed as a trainer at Bradley Field, CN. The 'Widowmaker' reputation died hard. (USAF)

Final B-26B, C and Marauder II Variants

Production of the final 'B' and 'C' variants began at Baltimore with the B-26B-20 and at Omaha with the B-26C-10. The most obvious external change was the introduction of a new, power-operated Martin-Bell tail turret, which shortened overall length to 56 ft 1 in. (The Omaha plant introduced the relocated waist positions on the 'C-10' so that 'B' and the 'B-20' were essentially identical.) Also added was external armor plate alongside the cockpit in an attempt to increase pilot protection. Omaha production continued through the 'C-45' version, Baltimore's production through the equivalent 'B-55'. Only minor modifications were introduced in these later models. On the 'B-45' and 'C-30' a V-shaped brace was added to the main cockpit windscreen on both sides. On the 'B-55' and 'C-45' the fixed 50 cal mg was deleted from the nose position. This change was often made in the field to earlier versions.

The 100 Marauder IIs delivered to the RAF and SAAF were B-26C-30s. Intervening in the middle of the production of these versions at both plants was an order for 208 AT-23As (Baltimore) and 375 AT-23Bs (Omaha). The AT-23 was a target tug version of the Marauder lacking all armor and armament and being fitted with a C-5 tow target windlass. Two hundred and fifty of the AT-23s were transferred to the Navy, where it was known as the JM-1. In 1944 the Army's AT-23s were redesignated TB-28. Omaha production of the Marauder ended with the last B-26C-45 in April 1944.

Tail Position Development



(B-26C-45)

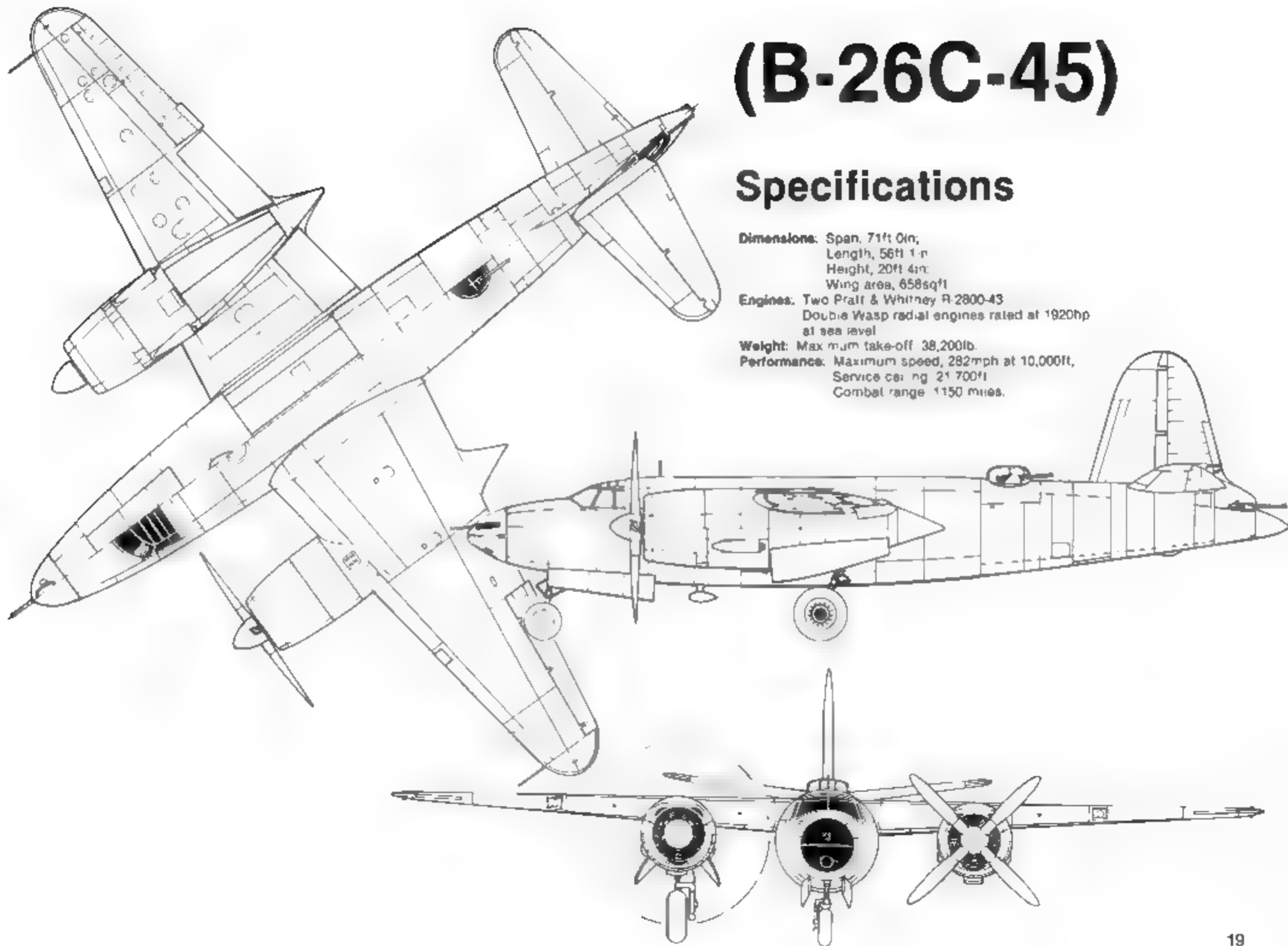
Specifications

Dimensions: Span, 71ft 0in;
Length, 56ft 1in
Height, 20ft 4in;
Wing area, 658sqft

Engines: Two Pratt & Whitney R-2800-43
Double Wasp radial engines rated at 1920hp
at sea level

Weight: Maximum take-off 38,200lb.

Performance: Maximum speed, 282mph at 10,000ft,
Service ceiling 21,700ft
Combat range 1150 miles.

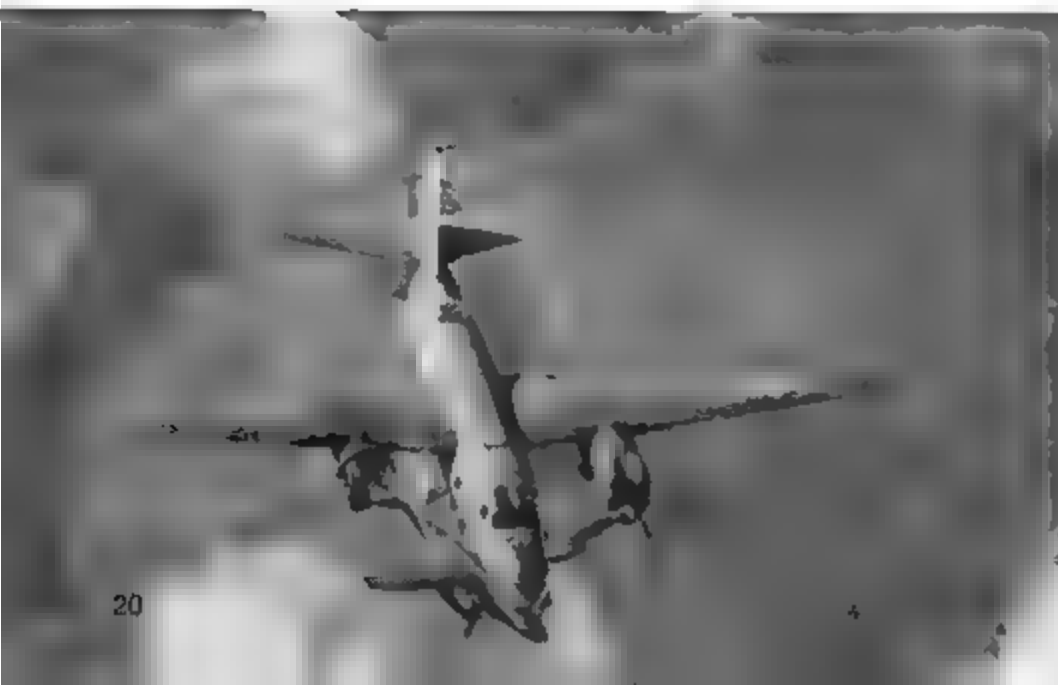




B-26s from the 458th BS 323rd BG bracketed by flak over Dieppe. The bursts killed the bombardier and wounded a gunner in 41 35033 the B-26C 20 on the left. The Marauder's excellent safety record was achieved on some of the hairiest missions of the war. (Imperial War Museum)

Flak ripped the right engine entirely from this 455th BS. 323rd BG Marauder. The aircraft slewed off course but the pilots got the crippled aircraft under control and bailed in safely a few minutes later. (Imperial War Museum)

A B-26B-25 from the 323rd BG unloads eight 500 pounders over France on 9 May 1944. Flak like this was the Marauders' worst enemy. (USAF)



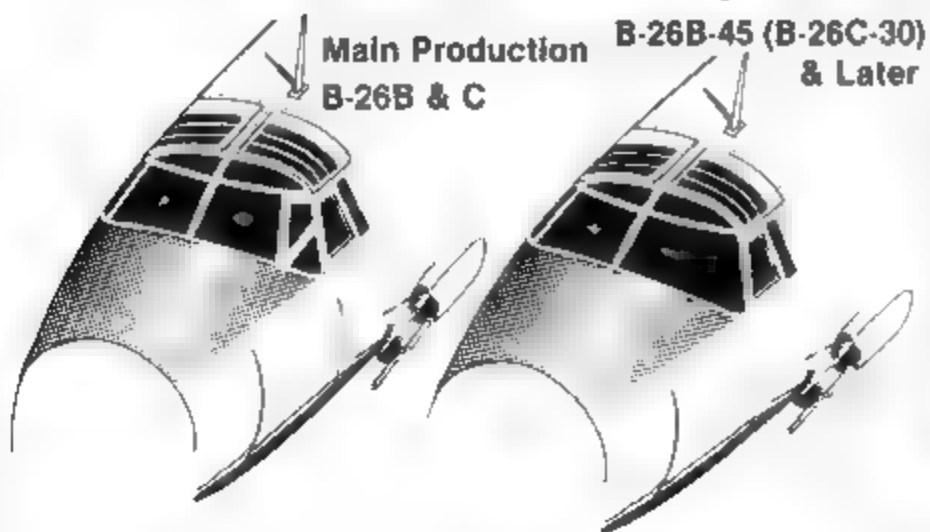


The paint is beginning to wear off the wing surfaces of this 387th BG Marauder, a B-26C-15 *Lorelei*, 41-34966, is seen in flight over France. The Yellow and Black tail band was adopted in October 1943, at the same time that the group was transferred to Ninth AF (USAF).

This 387th Bomb Group Marauder, a B-26B-50, 42-95930, is painted with a flowing pattern of Olive Drab and medium Green on the upper surfaces. It is a very late example of the 'text book' camouflage scheme seen on many B-26s. Note the braced windscreen on this late B.



Windscreen Development





The 322nd BG was the first unit to take Marauders into combat over Europe, beginning operations in May 1943. This pair of 449th BS B-26s practice formation flying over England late in the year. The rather unusual pattern of medium Green over faded Olive Drab on the fuselage sides is carried. (USAF)

The 322nd's *Mild and Bitter*, the B-26B which did more to save reputation of the Martin B-26 than any other, she survived 100 missions in the 'big league' so they brought her home to prove it. The old aircraft had always been lucky, collecting less than fifty flek holes during her career. She flew her 99th and 100th missions on the same day, 9 May 1944. Nobody was taking a great deal of notice of another 322nd aircraft, named *Flek Bar!* at the time. (Martin via air Force Museum)

The Hearse, a B-26B-15, 322nd BG, lands on one engine back at its base in England. The port engine was shot out by flak over the target in France but the pilot kept control and brought her all the way home. (USAF)





Bar Fly 41 31877 was a B-26B-30 from the 554th BS, 366th BG. Here she is on her 67th mission - she crashed on take-off after 175. The Yellow tail band was the group marking. She appears to have had the applique armor retrofitted or replaced indicated by the difference in the darkness of the fresh Olive Drab under the cockpit. (USAF)

(Below & Right) *Carefree Carolyn* in action over France and at the end of her career. The fire trucks and ambulance race forward as she slides in at Great Dunmow 15 June 1944. This veteran Marauder was returning from her 100th mission. (USAF)

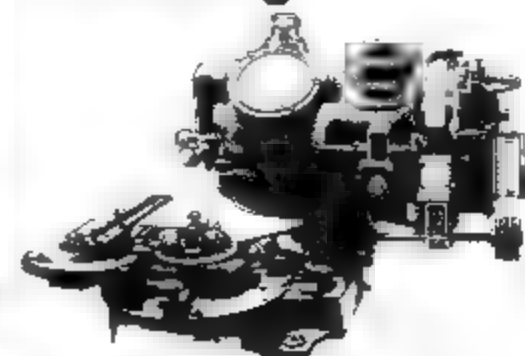




A doomed B-26C-45 from the 344th Bomb Group over France. Flak has hit her port engine and fuel tanks (Oscar Swenson)

A B-26C-45, 42 107562, from the 344th Bomb Group's 498th Squadron. The group has just bombed the airfield at Beauvais Tillé, France. Some units began receiving natural metal Meraders well before the July 1944 order which permitted the removal of camouflage. (USAF)

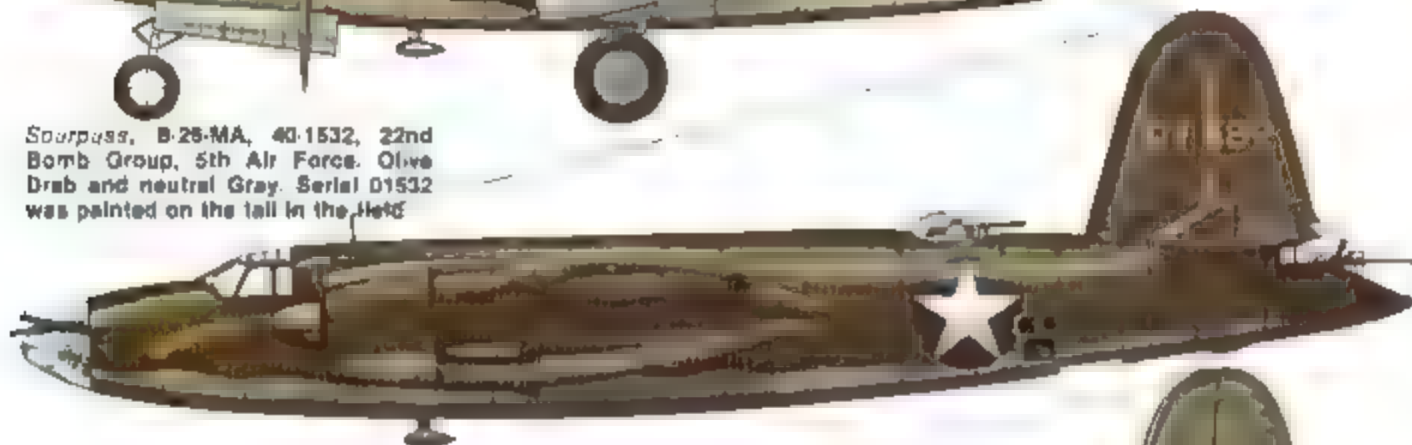
Norden M-7 Bombsight



B-26-MA, 40-1383, the third Marauder built, 33rd Bomb Squadron, 22nd Bomb Group. Overall natural metal.



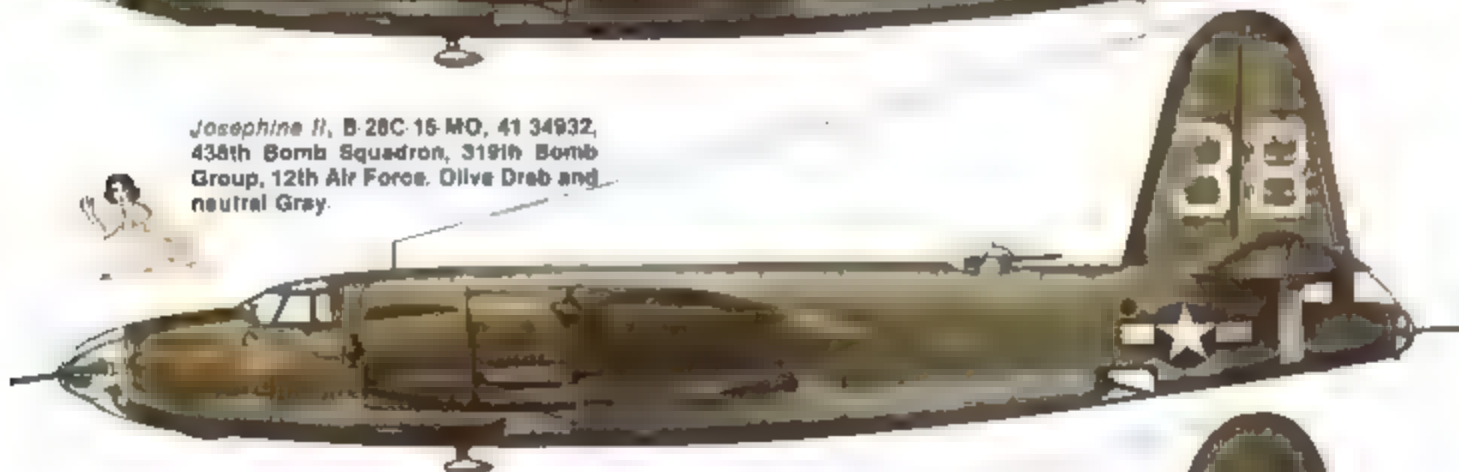
Sourpuss, B-26-MA, 40-1532, 22nd Bomb Group, 5th Air Force. Olive Drab and neutral Gray. Serial 01532 was painted on the tail in the field.



B-26B-25-MA, 41 31758, 449th Bomb Squadron, 222nd Bomb Group, 9th Air Force. Olive Drab, medium Green and neutral Gray.

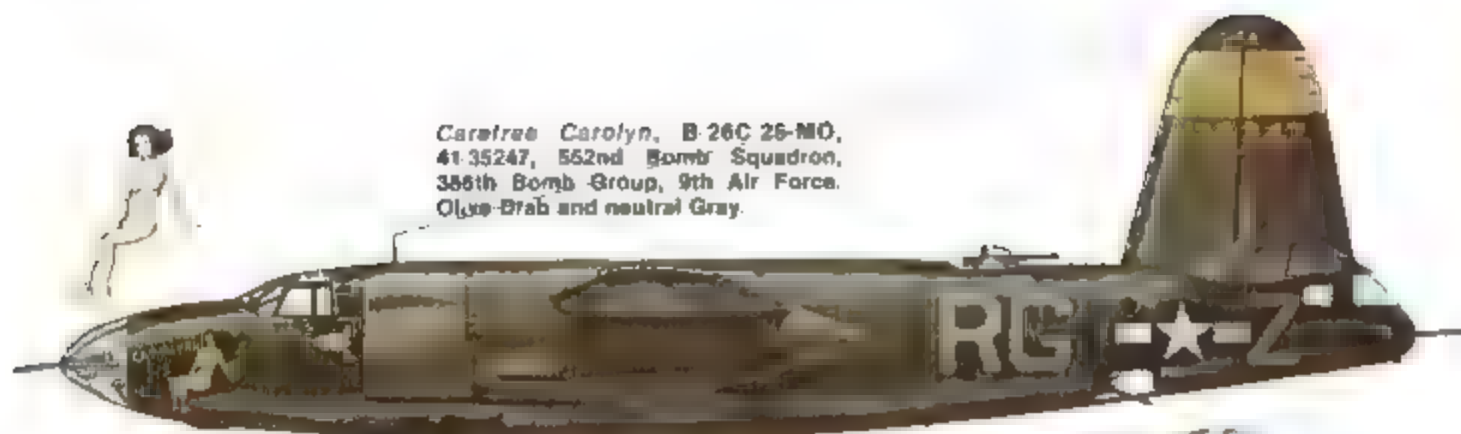


Josephine II, B-26C-15-MO, 41 34932, 438th Bomb Squadron, 319th Bomb Group, 12th Air Force. Olive Drab and neutral Gray.



B-26B-40-MA, 42-43384, 444th Bomb Squadron, 320th Bomb Group, 12th Air Force. Olive Drab and neutral Gray.



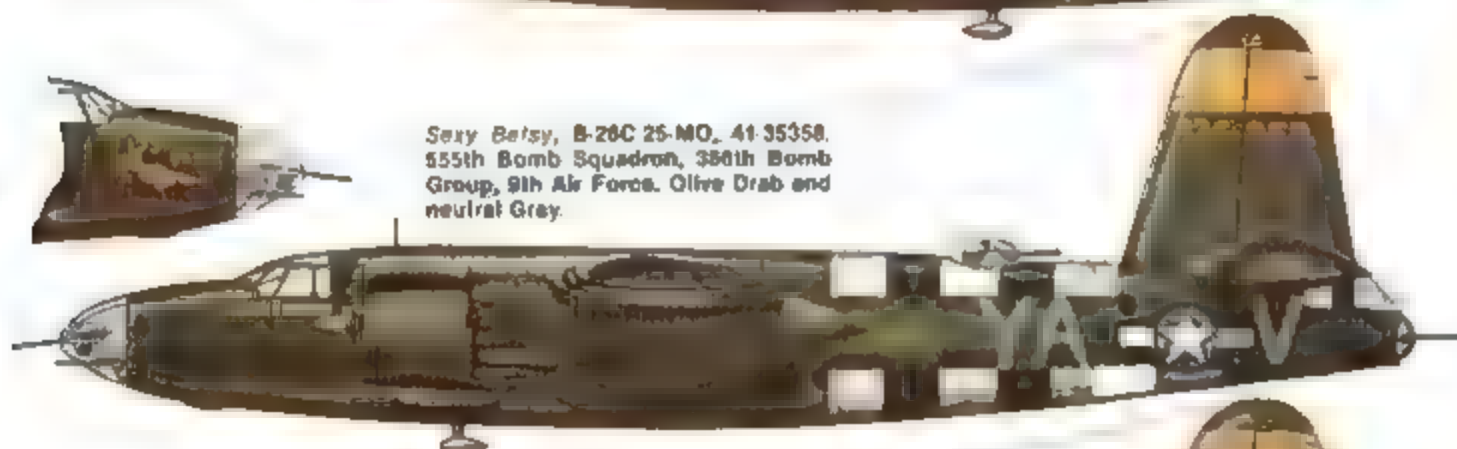


Carefree Carolyn, B-26C 25-MO, 41-35247, 552nd Bomb Squadron, 386th Bomb Group, 9th Air Force. Olive Drab and neutral Gray.

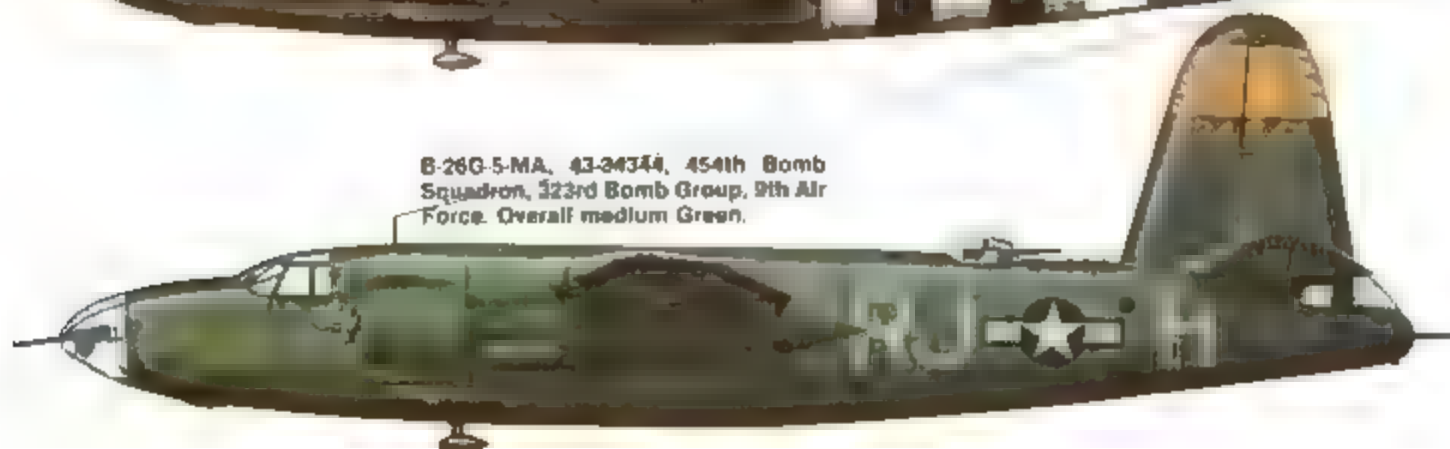
Dea Feater, B-26B-55-MA, 42-98142, 596th Bomb Squadron, 387th Bomb Group, 9th Air Force. Overall natural metal.



Gunga Din, B-26B-50-MA, 42-95998, 438th Bomb Squadron, 318th Bomb Group, 12th Air Force. Olive Drab, medium Green and neutral Gray.



Sexy Betsy, B-26C 25-MO, 41-35358, 555th Bomb Squadron, 386th Bomb Group, 9th Air Force. Olive Drab and neutral Gray.



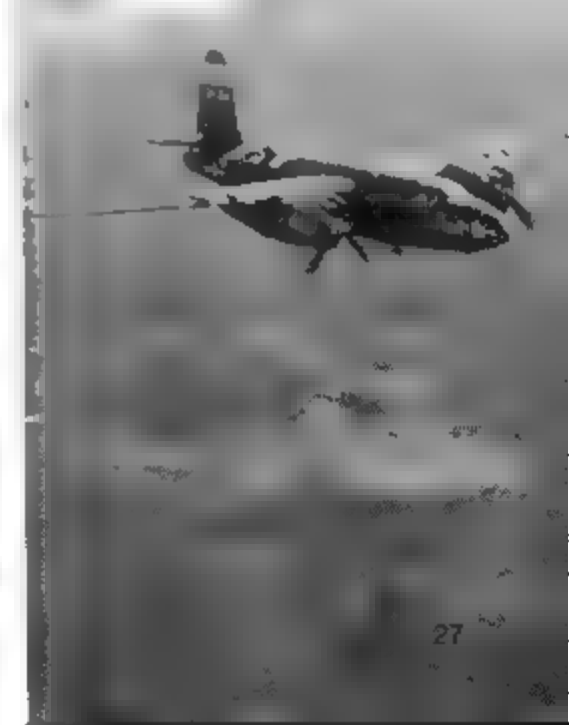
B-26G-5-MA, 43-34344, 454th Bomb Squadron, 323rd Bomb Group, 9th Air Force. Overall medium Green.

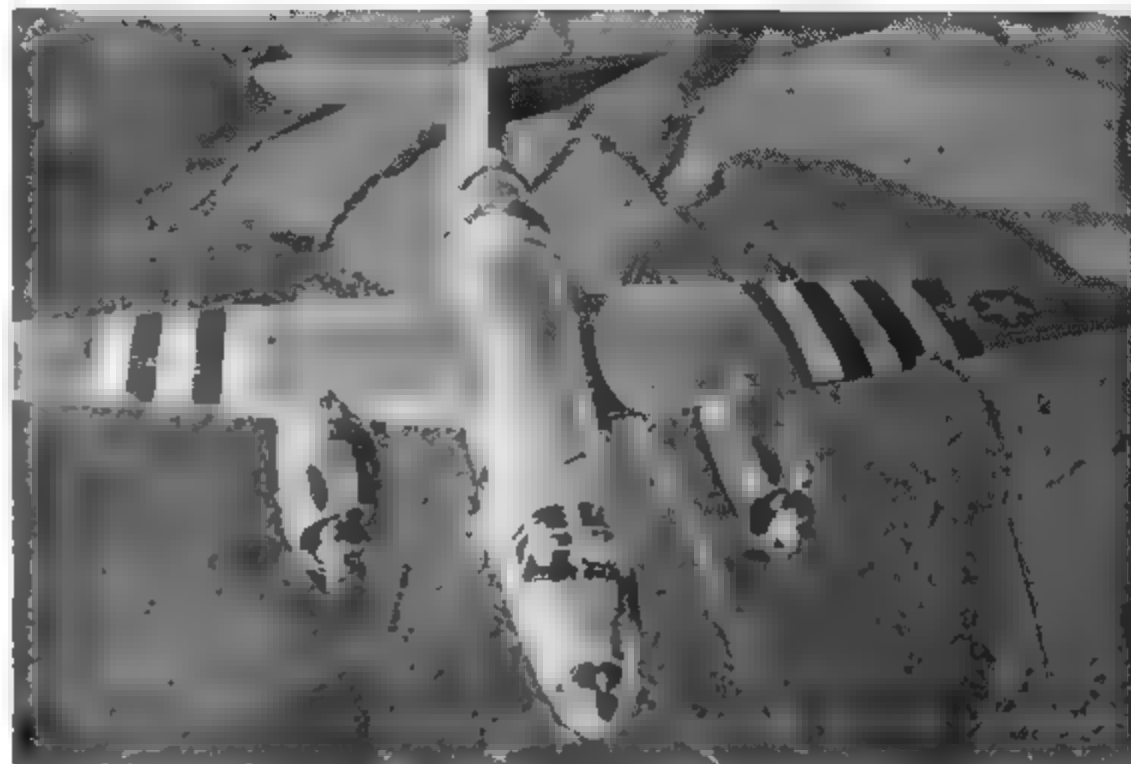
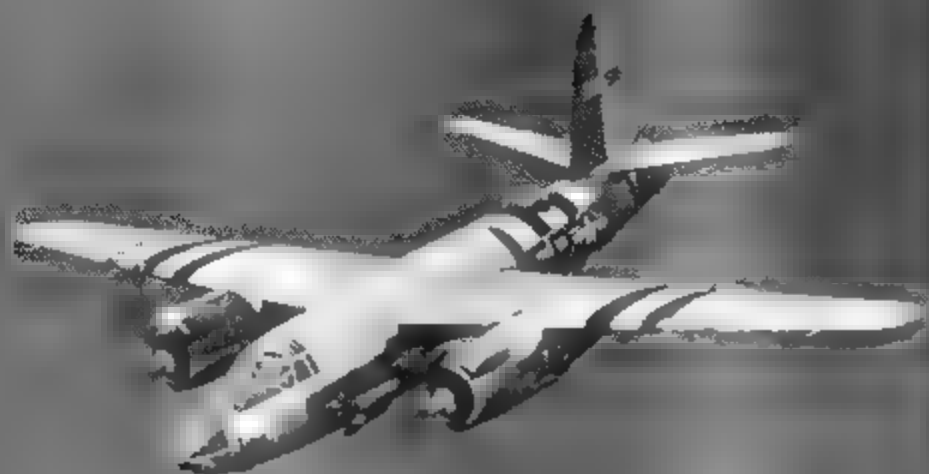


(Above) A B-26B-55 from the 555th BS after landing on one wheel at Great Dunmow on 8 June 1944. On unpainted aircraft the 386th BG outlined their Yellow tail band in Black. Note the very carefully applied Olive Drab band that served as primer for the invasion stripes. (USAF)

(Left & Right) *Sexy Betsy*, a B-26C-25 from the 386th Group's 555th Squadron, over Argentan, France on 14 June 1944. Her serial number was 41 35358. All Ninth AF Marauders had their aft bomb bay sealed shut, using only the forward, as at left. (USAF)

(Below) The *Yankee Guerilla* and the rest of the 386th BG leave Dover behind enroute to Normandy. Note the freshly applied invasion stripes on fuselage and wings. (USAF)





Rum Buggy from the 495th Bomb Squadron, 344th Bomb Group, over France. (Oscar Swenson)

(Left) The 322nd Bomb Group was unique. While all the other Ninth AF groups carried identifying tail bands or triangles, the 322nd was identified by the absence of group markings. This B-26C-45, 43-107655, flew with the 450th Squadron. This Marauder was delivered with camouflaged fin and starboard stabilizer (Imperial War Museum)

The Big, Harry Bird, a B-26B-55 from the 397th Bomb Group's 509th Bomb Squadron. (USAF)



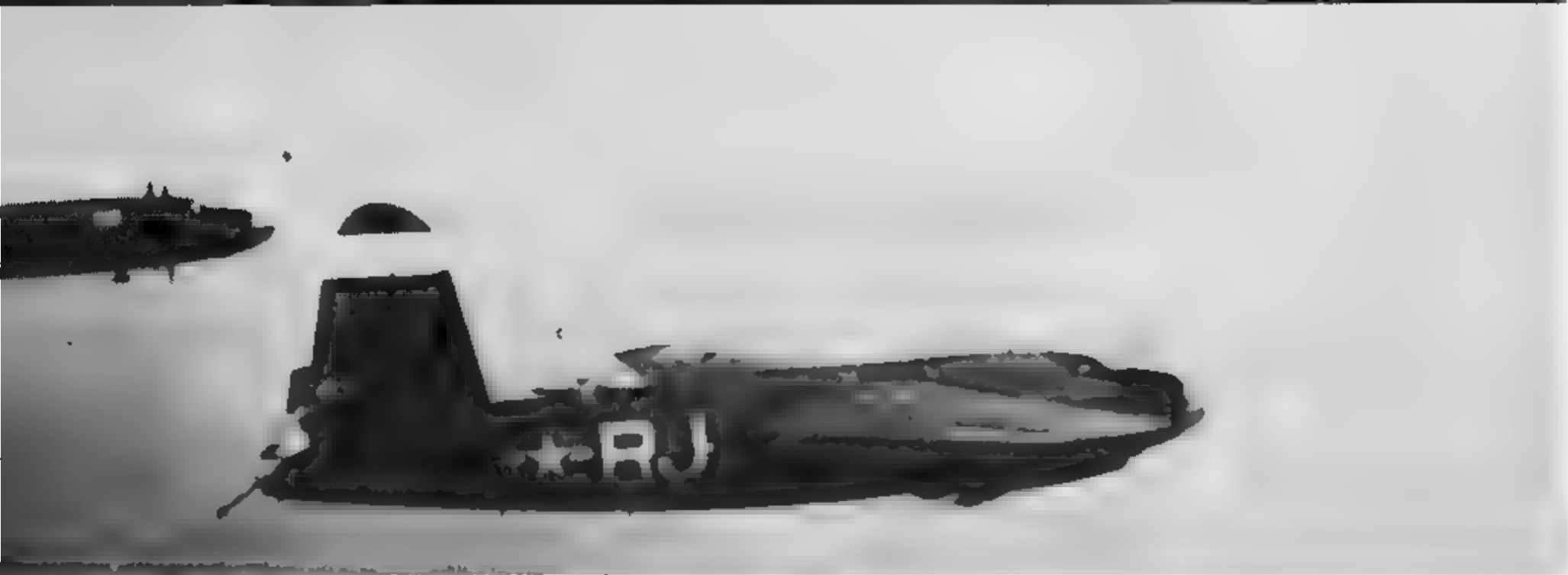


Two 323rd Group Marauders unloaded their bombs on a road junction at Torigni, France. The mix of camouflaged and natural metal B-26s within squadrons was common in mid-1944. (USAF)

These two 454th Bomb Squadron, 323rd Bomb Group B-26Cs have had their invasion stripes overpainted with Olive Drab to "remove" them. The unpainted aircraft has its White tail band outlined in Black. The order to paint out their stripes came from SHAEF in November 1944. (Imperial War Museum)

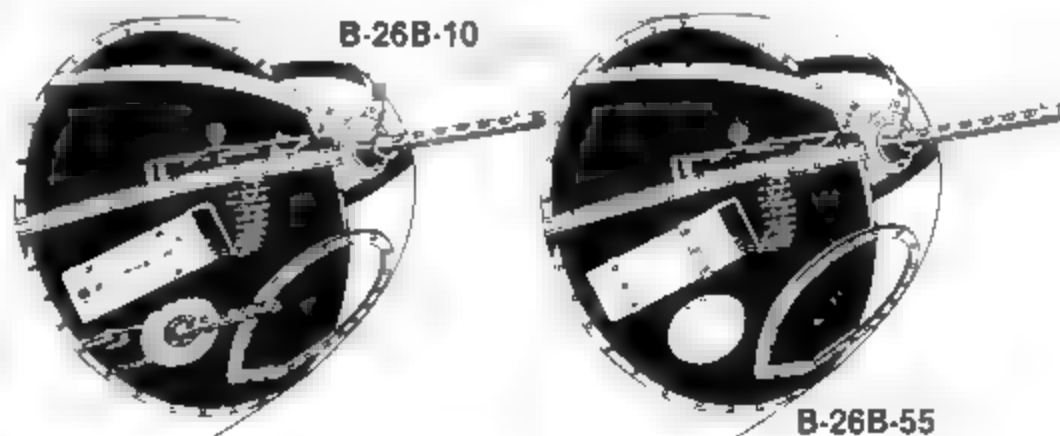
B-26s from the 344th Group over the marshalling yards at Namur, southeast of Brussels. The unpainted aircraft have their White tail triangles outlined in Black, while the B-26B-50 in the foreground, 42-95972, clearly illustrates the over pattern of the Olive Drab and medium Green paint scheme applied to some late Marauders. (Imperial War Museum)





When Marauder groups moved from England to France and became vulnerable to enemy air raids, camouflage quickly returned. *The Shark*, a B-26C-45 of the 323rd BG has been given a hasty coat of medium Green above neutral Gray (Robert Radlein)

Nose Development



Operating from forward airbases, the 323rd BG would often fly two or more missions per day in support of frontline troops. *'Hades Lady'* brings up the rear on a line of thirteen 456th BS Marauders. (USAF)





322nd Bomb Group
Marauders line up on the
taxiway before turning onto
the active. Most were
natural metal aircraft which
have had a hasty coat of
Olive Drab applied to the
wing upper surfaces and
fuselage spine, with some
fully camouflaged B-26s
mixed in. (William L.
Johnston, Jr.)





Three views of the incredible *Fisk Ball* between June 1943 and VE Day she managed to fly 202 missions, earning a well-deserved place in the collection at the National Air and Space Museum, Washington, D.C. Tragically, she is the only surviving Marauder Her 200 mission bomb marker eventually found its final position under her name. (William L. Johnston, Jr & Smithsonian Institution)



Shirley Ann, a weather-beaten veteran from the 344th Bomb Group. A B-26B-50, 42-95914, she is seen over the snow-covered French landscape during the winter of 1944-45. (Oscar Swenson)

Blowing up a minor snowstorm with her prop wash, this B-26B-25 of the 554th BS, 386th BG, prepares to leave her forward base on another strike mission. (USAF)



This B-26C-25 flew with the 17th Bomb Group's 34th Squadron with the First TAF. A flak hit over the Roccasecca Bridge knocked out the left engine and the crew is stripping the aircraft trying to hold their place in formation. A belt of .50 calibre ammunition can be seen flying out of the beam gun position. The Red tail band which identified the 17th is just visible. The Red surround on the national insignia dates this view from mid-1943 (USAF)





The 17th BG drops through solid overcast on a German troop concentration, 1944. The 17th was the oldest medium bomber group in the USAAF though it was the second to arrive in the MTO. It served with the Twelfth AF and First TAF throughout the Italian and Southern French Campaigns. Note the field fitted applique armor (USAF)



Smoke bolts up from a German ammunition dump near Heidelberg. These two B-26C-45s, from the 17th Group's 95th Squadron, were rocked by the concussion of the explosions. This was near the end of the Marauder's War, Spring 1945. (USAF)

A 17th Bomb Group B-26C-45 cruises low over the shambles of Florence's rail yards, inspecting the handiwork of the Marauders. The Italian city was still in enemy hands at this time. Such low altitude work was dangerous but necessary (USAF)





Six B-26Cs take-off in formation from their North African base where they experimented with a new six-plane formation. These aircraft are from the 319th Bomb Group's 440th Squadron with white cowl rings, tail bands and battle numbers. Battle numbers were introduced in late 1943 to help distinguish the 42nd BW's three groups. The color and placement identified the group. Each squadron within the group was assigned a block of numbers. (USAF)



The 319th heads home after a bridge-busting mission near Florence. The 319th was the first Marauder unit active in the MTO (USAF)

A B-26B-50 from the 319th Group's 439th Squadron. 42-85924, over the marshalling yards at Florence, Italy. Marauders achieved an enviable record for bombing accuracy. (USAF)





By the end of October 1944, fifteen 319th Group Marauders had amassed a total of 1718 missions between them. This B-26C 15, *Josephine II*, flew 100 missions with the 438th Bomb Squadron, such as this sortie over Toulon, 1944. (USAF)

The 437th BS, 319th BG flew this mission in support of Operation Anvil, the invasion of Southern France. '09' is a B-26C 15. '01', the squadron leader's aircraft, has a Blue tail indicating its status. (USAF)



Gunga Din, a B-26B-50, from the 319th Group, over Florence. Bombing of targets in this historic city was a testament to the ability of Marauder crews of the Twelfth AF. In one attack on the rail yards no bombs fell more than two hundred yards from the target, and the railroad yards were devastated. *Gunga Din* is in textbook camouflage with medium Green scallops at the edges of the Olive Drab horizontal surfaces. Unlike the early war version of the same camouflage, this was done with the later slower-fading Olive Drab so that the edges were lighter than the main wing surface. Only on the fabric-covered control surfaces did the effect fail. (USAF)





A B-26B-40, 42-43302, from the 320th Bomb Group, Twelfth AF over Southern France. The 320th used Yellow numbers and tail band. (USAF)



Marauders from the 320th Bomb Group, with Yellow battle numbers and tail bands. The aircraft in the foreground, 42-107549, is a B-26C-45. These Marauders are participating in OPERATION STRANGLE, designed to disrupt the German supply system in Italy, Spring 1944. (USAF)



A B-26C-40 from the 320th Bomb Group's 444th Squadron, identified by the leering sharkmouth on the nose, over Northern Italy. The 444th BS was the only MTO group to adopt a sharkmouth. (USAF)



Ann, a sharkmouthed B-26C-45, S/N 42-107541 returning to the 320th Group's French base. She is missing her upper package gun on the starboard side. (USAF)

With Yellow battle number and tail band outlined in Black, a 444th Bomb Squadron B-26C-45 heads into a flak pattern over France. (USAF)





Most Marauders carried fairly plain personal markings, only one unit, the 444th BS, became known for its 'cheese-cake' nose art, and that only late in the war. (Above) *Miss Arkansas*, painted by Sgt. Vernon Prince, was perhaps the most professionally painted of the bunch. (Above Right) *My Darling Agiator* was a recamouflaged Marauder seen in France. (Below Right) *Ol' Folks* was also a repaint. Note the serial block still on its natural metal background. (Below) *Fu-Ber* shows a cutie riding a fragmentation bomb. (Smithsonian Institution via Jay Spenser)





The First Tactical Air Force (1st TAF) was established in November 1944, comprising the 17th and 320th Bomb Groups and two Escadres of Armée de l'Air B-26s. These French Marauders are from Groupe de Bombardement 1/22. All are B-26C-45s. The fitting of only one package gun per side seems to have been common among the French manned ships (USAF)



Two Hundred Fifty target-bug Marauders were transferred to the Navy, being redesignated JM-1s. Essentially identical to late B-26B or C models, they were completely without armor or armament and had small carburetor intakes and a revised tail position that looked similar to the early B-26 style. This example, BuNo 66749, was operated by the Marines in overall Chrome Yellow (Smithsonian Institution)





This well-known photograph shows *Flak Bart* and a squadron mate over Belgium. PN★X is a B-26Q-5 while *Flak Bart* is a B-26B-25. The 3.5 degree change in wing incidence on the later model can be seen in the angle of the engine relative to the fuselage. (USAF)

B-26F, B-26G & Marauder III

The final variants of the Marauder were characterized by an increase in wing incidence by 3.5 degrees in a final attempt to reduce take-off run and landing speed. Top speed dropped again, now to 277mph. With this change the B-26F-1 began to emerge from the Baltimore factory in February 1944. Two hundred further F-1s were produced as B-26F-2s and F-6s for the RAF, known as Marauder IIIs. They were identical to the F-1.

The substitution of AN standard internal equipment for USAAF versions brought about the B-26G, which was externally identical to the F-1. Eight hundred and ninety-three B-26Gs in eight production blocks came off the Baltimore line. This included 75 B-26G-11s and 75 B-26G-21s for the RAF under the designation Marauder III. Fifty-seven

B-26Gs were produced, of which 32 went to the Navy as JM-2s. The last Marauder was built at Baltimore on 30 March 1944.

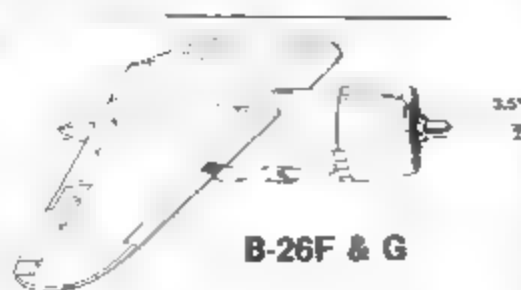
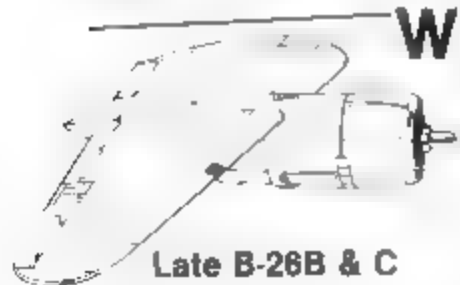
B-26 inventory reached a height of 1,931 aircraft in USAAF service in March 1944. Numbers declined rapidly from that point, few B-26s surviving into post-war service. By war's end, most Marauder groups had switched to A-26 invaders which possessed greater range and speed, or had simply been disbanded. Three groups only were incorporated into the occupation forces in Germany. By February 1946, the last active Marauder was deactivated in Europe and by the end of the year it had disappeared completely from USAAF inventory. Even the French, who received large numbers of B-26s during and after the war, phased out the Marauder in 1947. Those that hadn't been given to the French were gathered at Landsberg, Germany for demolition.

Why had the Marauder disappeared so quickly when its contemporary, the B-25 Mitchell, was to see extensive post-war service? The answer, despite the unequalled record of crew safety and bombing accuracy enjoyed by Marauders, was that economics and the B-26's initial bad reputation were to doom it to a rapid demise at war's end. Mitchells were 25% cheaper to produce, so they stayed in production long after the Marauder lines were closed. In the final analysis, however, it was the 'Widowmaker' reputation, never fully corrected, which led to the B-26's quick end.



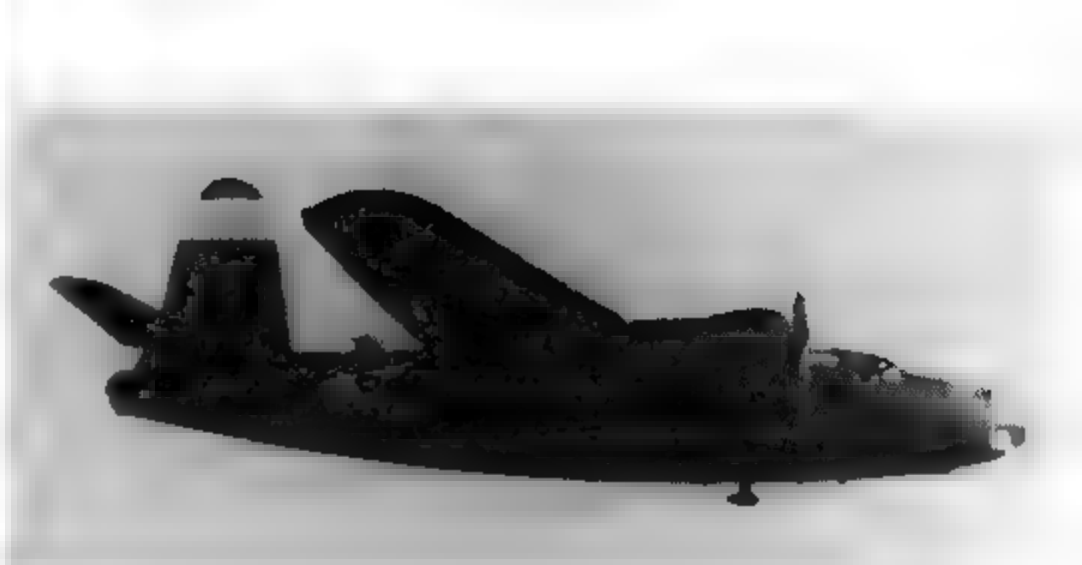
Belgian civilians take a guided tour of a 344th Bomb Group B-26F-1 in April 1945. (Oscar Swenson)

Wing Development



"Liz Maggie" was a B-26G of the 322nd BG in France. She appears to have a replacement rudder (Smithsonian Institution)



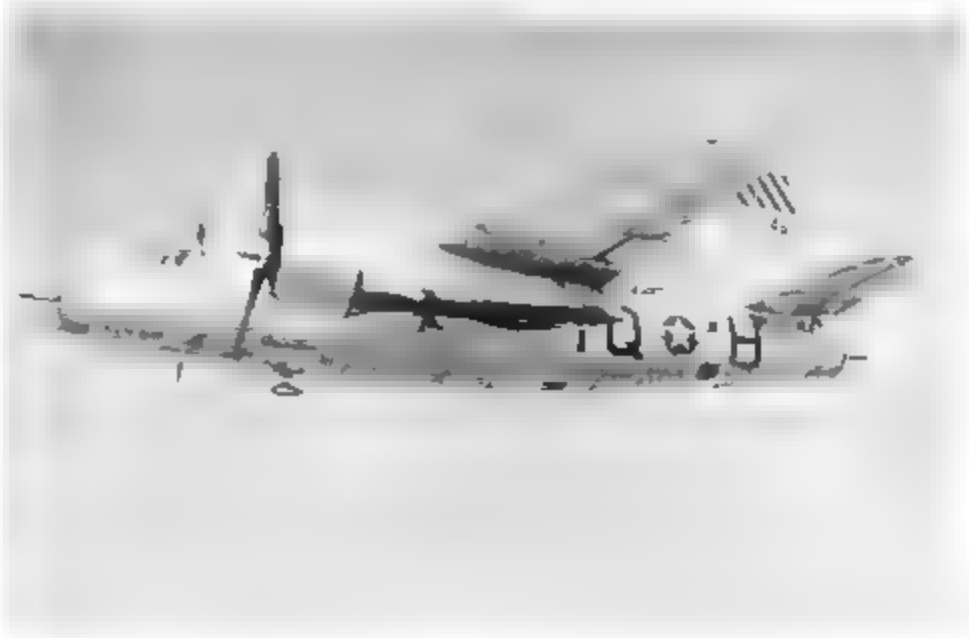


Lt. Weinberg's B-26G-5 enroute to Naumberg, 9 April 1945. This mission by the 323rd BG was one of the last Marauder raids of the war. This bird is overall medium Green. (Robert Radlein)

(Upper Left) A B-26G-5 from the 323rd Bomb Group's 456th Bomb Squadron, over an enemy strongpoint near Duren, Germany. The application of camouflage paint to the aircraft's upper surfaces only was a more common style of recamouflaging. (USAF)

(Lower Left) Ground crewmen de-ice a 323rd Bomb Group B-26. This aircraft has the medium Green uppersurfaces which the group applied to their Marauders.

■ B-26F-1, 42-96246, flew with the 558th Bomb Squadron of the 387th Bomb Group.





(Above & Right) B 28Gs of the 397th Bomb Group with their Yellow diagonal tail stripe are seen on the ground and in the air over Germany. (USAF)

A B-28G-25 from the 394th Bomb Group dumps a load of 2000 pound bombs on the rail yard at Ulm, a key link in the supply route to the 'Bavarian Redoubt' (USAF)



Marauder Production List

B-26MA	40-1361 - 40-1561	B-26C-5, -6-MO	41-34673 - 41-34847
B-26A-MA	41-7345 - 41-7365 41-7368 41-7431 41-7477 - 41-7483	B-26C-10-MO	41-34848 - 41-34907
		B-26C-15-MO	41-34908 - 41-34997
		B-26C-20-MO	41-34998 - 41-35172
B-26A-1-MA	41-7366 41-7367 41-7369 - 41-7430 41-7432 - 41-7476	B-26C-25-MO	41-35173 - 41-35370 41-35372
		AT-23B-MO	41-35371 41-35561 - 41-35872 42-107471 - 42-107496 42-107831 - 42-107855
B-26B-MA	41-17544 - 41-17624 41-17626 - 41-17851		
B-26B-2-MA	41-17852 - 41-17946	B-26C-30-MO	41-35374 - 41-35515 41-35517 - 41-35538 41-35540 41-35548 - 41-35551 41-35553 - 41-35560
B-26B-3-MA	41-17625 41-17947 - 41-17973		
B-26B-4-MA	41-17974 - 41-18184	B-26C-45-MO	42-107497 - 42-107830
B-26B-10-MA	41-18185 - 41-18334	B-26F-1-MA	42-96328 - 42-96328
B-26B-15-MA	41-31573 - 41-31672	B-26F-2-MA	42-96329 - 42-96428
B-26B-20-MA	41-31673 - 41-31772	B-26F-6-MA	42-96429 - 42-96429
B-26B-25-MA	41-31773 - 41-31872		
B-26B-30-MA	41-31873 - 41-31972	B-26G-1-MA	43-34115 - 43-34214
B-26B-35-MA	41-31973 - 41-32072	B-26G-5-MA	43-34215 - 43-34464 43-34540 - 43-34614
B-26B-40-MA	42-43280 - 42-43357 42-43360 42-43361 42-43459	B-26G-11-MA	43-34465 - 43-34539
		B-26G-15-MA	44-67805 - 44-67944
AT-23A-MA	42-43358 42-43359 42-43362 - 42-43458 42-95629 - 42-95737	TB-26G-15-MA	44-67945 - 44-67954
		B-26G-20-MA	44-67970 - 44-67989 44-68104 - 44-68104
B-26B-45-MA	42-95738 - 42-95828	TB-26G-20-MA	44-67955 - 44-67969
B-26B-50-MA	42-95829 - 42-96028	B-26G-21-MA	44-67990 - 44-67990
B-26B-55-MA	42-96029 - 42-96228	B-26G-25-MA	44-68105 - 44-68221 44-68254
		TB-26G-25-MA	44-68222 - 44-68253



When the 319th Group converted to B-25 Mitchells in late 1944, its B-26s were distributed to the AAF and French units in the First TAF. This B-26G-10, 43-34564 of the 319th Bomb Group, shows evidence of the removal of an earlier battle number.

A ship belonging to the 1st Tactical Air Force returns after attacking the marshalling yards at Heidelberg on 23 March 1945. (USAF)





The end of the line — Tail End Charlie "30" — the final Marauder, B-26G-25, 44-68254, rolls out. (Martin via Air Force Museum)



(Right & Below) Middle River Stump Jumper, the second to last B-26, the XB-26H, was a converted B-26G-5 fitted with an experimental four wheel bicycle undercarriage of the type being designed for the Martin XB-48. (USAF)



F6F HELLCAT

in action



squadron/signal publications
AIRCRAFT NO. 36

SS1036 F6F Hellcat in Action

P-51 Mustang

in action



squadron/signal publications
AIRCRAFT NO. 45

SS1045 P-51 Mustang in Action

Messerschmitt Bf 109

in action
Part 1



squadron/signal publications
AIRCRAFT NO. 44

Messerschmitt Bf 109

in action
Part 2



Aircraft Number 57

squadron/signal publications

SS1044 Messerschmitt Bf109 in Action Part 1

SS1057 Messerschmitt Bf109 in Action Part 2

P-47 Thunderbolt

in action



Aircraft Number 57

squadron/signal publications

SS1067 P-47 Thunderbolt in Action



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SS1039 Spitfire in Action

F4U CORSAIR

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AIRCRAFT NO. 29

SS1029 F4U Corsair in Action

A6M ZERO

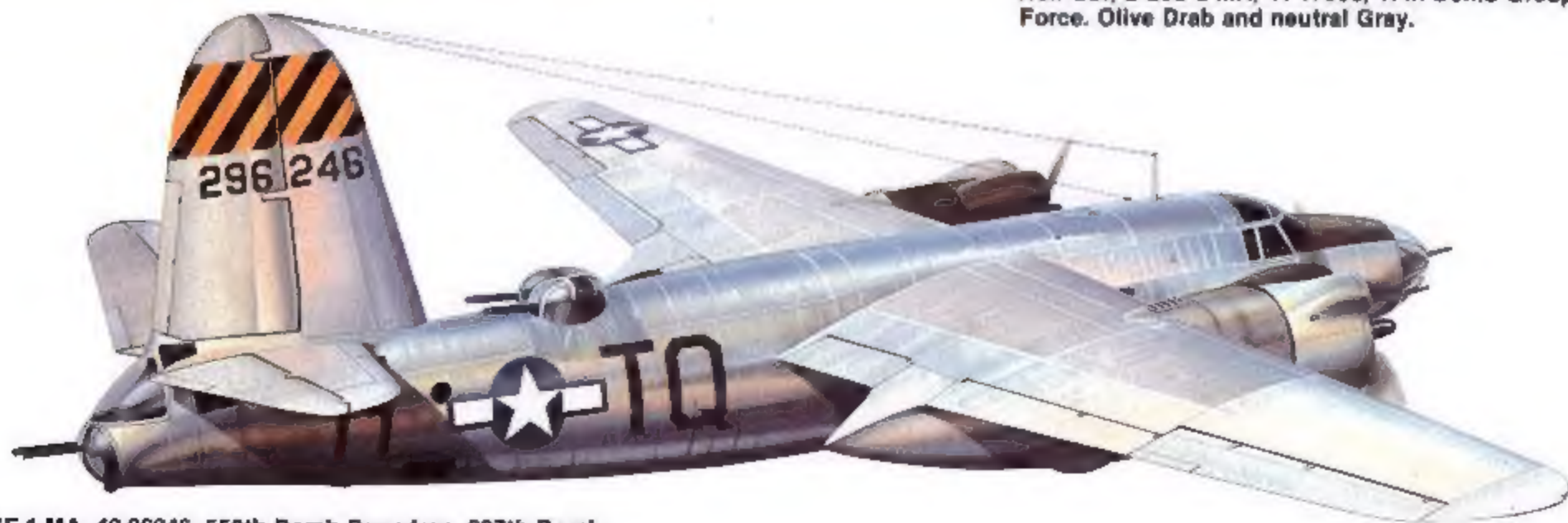
in action



SS1059 A6M Zero in Action



Hell Cat, B-26B-2-MA, 41-17903, 17th Bomb Group, 12th Air Force. Olive Drab and neutral Gray.



B-26F-1-MA, 42-96246, 558th Bomb Squadron, 387th Bomb Group, 9th Air Force. Overall natural metal.